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A WANDERER'S LOG

BY

C. E. BECHHOFER

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A WANDERER'S LOG

C. E. BECHHOFER HAS WRITTEN—

THE HOLY HILL

Being a Journey Round my Room, a *Novel*

THROUGH STARVING RUSSIA

Being the Record of a Journey to Moscow and the Volga Provinces in August and September, 1921

IN DENIKIN'S RUSSIA AND THE CAUCASUS

Being the Record of a Journey to South Russia, the Crimea, Armenia, Georgia and Baku in 1919 and 1920

RUSSIA AT THE CROSS ROADS, 1916

WITH MAURICE B. RECKITT

THE MEANING OF NATIONAL GUILDS

First Edition, 1918; Second and Revised Edition, 1920

TRANSLATED—

THE TWELVE

A Poem by Alexander Blok, with illustrations and cover designs by Michael Larionov

FIVE RUSSIAN PLAYS WITH ONE FROM THE UKRAINIAN

"A Merry Death" and "The Beautiful Despot," by Nicholas Evreinov; "The Choice of a Tutor," by Denis Vonvizin; "The Wedding" and "The Jubilee," by Anton Chehov; and "The Babylonian Captivity," by Lesya Ukrainka

AND EDITED—

A RUSSIAN ANTHOLOGY IN ENGLISH

ALLEPPEY, IN MALABAR

29700

A WANDERER'S LOG

BEING SOME MEMORIES OF TRAVEL IN INDIA, THE FAR EAST, RUSSIA, THE MEDITERRANEAN & ELSEWHERE

BY

C. E. BECHHOFER

WITH 13 ILLUSTRATIONS FROM PHOTOGRAPHS

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TO

AUDREY

WITH PATERNAL RESPECT

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A WANDERER'S LOG

I

INDIA

WHEN I was fifteen years old, my father, most generous of men, not unnaturally alarmed at a sudden swerve in my character towards the writing of poetry and the championing of advanced causes, decided in the manner of fathers that it was time I was sent about the world to "knock the nonsense out of me." I was promptly removed from school, where, being a precocious youth, I was already well started on my way towards my ideal of becoming a classical scholar, and sent post-haste to Germany, where, it was understood, a good beginning would be made towards knocking the nonsense out of me.

Something, however, seemed to go wrong with the programme. It had been intended that I should enter a "Commercial High School" and learn languages and commerce and other useful things, but within a month

I found myself a member of the Classical-Philological faculty of a German University and, what to me was much more important, a member of a Students' Club whose days were given to rowing and nights to drinking, duelling also being another important item of our regime. It is perhaps not surprising that, when I went home for my holidays that year, my father agreed with me that only a journey round the world would really knock the nonsense out of me; and so it came about that in November, 1911, within a few days of my seventeenth birthday, I was a passenger on an ocean liner en route for the East.

But there must have been a terrible lot of nonsense in me, for although I have outlived my infantile infatuation with such booby-traps as Marxian Socialism and Women's Suffrage, and have reduced my attempts at verse, as the reader will discover, chiefly to translations, I have been wandering about restlessly for the past ten years and have not yet found wisdom. I have travelled extensively in the Northern Hemisphere—by some strange chance I have never crossed the Equator, though I have more than once lost my shadow beneath it—and chiefly in the out-of-the-way corners of it. Indeed, I no longer know where to turn in search of new travel experiences. I traversed India more than

once from Malabar to the Himalayas; I travelled through parts of Japan where the people would run out of their houses for the unprecedented adventure of seeing a white man; I knew that now vanished German province of China, Tsing-Tau, as well as many other parts of the Far East; I touched, sometimes for a long time, sometimes not for long, at all the ports of the Mediterranean, from Port Said to Algeciras, whose hinterlands held a promise of interest; I saw Russia at first hand, from the Tsarist regime at the outbreak of the war, by way of the Denikin campaigns in 1919 and 1920, to its final agony under the Bolshevists, to say nothing of the numerous new border States, both in the Caucasus and by the Baltic, which rose out of its disintegration with greater or less degree of permanence; and several times I crossed to the New World and got nonsense knocked out of me in the United States and in Canada.

I do not know of any place more where I can go with advantage to myself. The South Pole does not really, I fancy, present much human interest; a year ago Soviet Russia was a forbidden land, but more by luck than design I was able to enter it. Perhaps, indeed, I must wait until I go to Heaven before the last of the nonsense is knocked out of me; and even this, I fear, may not come in this

life. But I do not complain. Even if the essential task has not been successfully accomplished, I have had a very pleasant and interesting time; and it is in the hope that other parents and sons will seek a similar means of action that I am setting down here some of the memories of my ten wander years.

* * * * *

I went to India almost too well prepared. Indian mythology had always attracted me, and I read a great deal of it, including nearly the whole hundred volumes of the *Mahabharata*, the epic of ancient India which is an encyclopedia of its customs and beliefs. Perhaps I read too much; for I went out with the belief that all Brahmins, the members of the highest Hindu caste, were saintly and prodigiously learned men, wise in both exoteric and esoteric science. Comparison of the modern Hindu with his ancient prototype was disappointing, but at least it meant that instead of coming to India as a raw "griffin," regarding all Indians without distinction as "niggers" of an inferior race and behaving towards them accordingly, I arrived with a more intimate basis of approach to the people who are, after all, the really interesting inhabitants of the country. I had no introductions to Anglo-Indian officialdom, nor did

I desire any; moreover, I had not enough money to be able to make my way into the inner circles of European society in India. Instead, I spent the better part of two years wandering round and round the peninsula, chiefly in the company of Indians of various races and creeds and, what was not unentertaining, meeting many curious types of Europeans whose names do not figure in the Viceroy's visiting list.

The Indian police were somewhat exercised about me. They would not believe my own account of myself, as a wanderer without any political axe to grind, and they had no satisfactory alternative explanation; I soon got used to the presence of discreet Indian gentlemen who would call round and interview my cook about me. I would call them in, and they would confess naïvely that they had been sent by the police to find out all about me. I remember once, when I had a bungalow in the city limits of Poona, that a Mahratta Brahmin came in this way and concluded his visit by recounting innumerable stories of Mahratta history, a book upon which I was then meditating. But the most interesting thing he told was the story of his own coming into the world. It is very typical of the Hindu outlook.

"My father," he said, "had a favourite

brother, and the latter was suddenly taken very ill when he and my father were on a journey together. When it was clear that he must die, my father, who was holding him in his arms, asked him, though his body perished, not to desert him; and my uncle promised that his soul would always be with my father and endeavour to aid and guard him. Then he died, and my father was very sad. This took place several hundreds of miles away from Poona at a town where my father and uncle had gone for a pilgrimage. A few days after my father returned home I was born, but to the horror of my parents I refused to allow myself to be fed. They called priests and holy men from all the temples of the town and its vicinity; prayers were offered up and charms pronounced; everything possible was done; but still I refused to take food. Then my father remembered my dead uncle's words and an inspiration came to him. Looking earnestly at me, he said that he now recognised in me a new incarnation of my uncle's spirit, and he promised that he would call me by his dead brother's name and would always regard me as him. Immediately, so I have heard, I laughed and began to feed, and the priests went away marvelling at the devotion of my uncle and the sagacity of my father."

I could not account such interludes as this with the agents of the police as altogether wasted time, but a few years later, I was fated to discover that they were to have disagreeable results. Not until the end of the war did I discover that the Indian police had definitely listed me as a fomenter of Indian revolution, a charge which in 1919 was investigated in London at my request and withdrawn as mere stupidity. During my wanderings in India I went to see Indians of all political views, from sturdy old reactionaries to such revolutionaries as Arabindo Ghose in his refuge in the French settlement of Pondichery; naturally the Indian police, like all police, were more anxious to make out a case against me than to discover the truth, and affected to believe that my visits to the revolutionaries revealed a whole-hearted sympathy with them and their aims —a plausible theory, but not true.

I was able to allow myself only two luxuries in India—three, if keeping servants can be considered one in a climate where it is held somewhat injudicious for a European even to put on his own shirt!—a horse whenever I stayed in a district for any length of time, and unlimited travelling by road, rail and water. My horse and groom cost me about thirty shillings a month, the horse, I fear, being usually far better fed than its attendant,

as is the custom. I usually travelled "intermediate" class on the railway, a class between the more expensive second and the impossible third, and in this way I met innumerable specimens of submerged "poor whites" as well as Eurasians, who always drew a strict colour-line (not always obvious to their fellow-travellers) against any Indians who wished to enter the carriage. In hotels, too, I usually selected the cheapest—there was often not so much difference between the best and the worst—and if I met less cold-weather tourists in these places, I at least saw rather more of local life. When, for example, shall I forget the day on which an English gentleman whose advertisements modestly described him as "the Chaliapine of the East" borrowed twenty rupees from me to pay his Indian tailor, saying, "You know, old chap, really one doesn't care to keep these niggers waiting for their money. It's not the right thing—the white man's burden, and all that," and who upon receipt of the money kicked the tailor down the steps of the hotel (under the impression that I had gone out) and spent the rupees on a *tête-à-tête* dinner in the local restaurant with "the Patti of the Orient" who also had just arrived in the place?

Besides British India, I liked also to visit the parts of India which represent the ruins

of older European civilisations in the East. Very vividly I remember my visits to Goa, once the headquarters of the great Portuguese Eastern Empire, and still the most important town of its few present-day remains.

Goa is now a small Portuguese province on the west coast of India, half-way between Bombay and Malabar. It consists of an island and a certain portion of the adjoining mainland; this, with the tiny island of Diu and the settlement of Daman, north of Bombay, Macao in China, and Timor in the South Seas, is all that is left of that marvellous adventure—the Portuguese Empire of the East.

Three hundred years ago, and less, there was a powerful Viceroy at Goa, with armies of soldiers and administrators to garrison the rich Portuguese conquests that lined the coasts of India and the Farther East. From Goa as centre, too, the Jesuits led by S. Francis Xavier (whose bones rest there to this day), scattered throughout the East, penetrating even into Japan. In Goa lived the poet Camoens—"most illustrious island," he called it—and many other poets and painters, to bear witness to the might and magnificence of its early governors—Affonso de Albuquerque, the founder; Vasco de Gama; Francisco de Almeida, and the rest.

Now the decay is complete. As if to bear witness to this, the famous old capital has been deserted and a new city built a few miles away on higher ground, nearer the open sea. There is little in New Goa to remind one of the island's ancient glories. It is a sleepy place, with a large Indian quarter; the houses of the wealthier Portuguese are built round a central square, just like a small provincial town in Europe. A by no means palatial Governor's Palace, a few official buildings, a bank, some warehouses and barracks, one or two tumble-down hotels and a café complete the resemblance. Except for the Governor himself and a handful of the higher officials, there are not very many Europeans in Goa now. The inhabitants are largely descendants of the first Portuguese soldiers in the East, who were married in hundreds to forcibly baptised Indian women, while their commanders chose themselves mistresses and wives from the harems of the Mohammedan rulers of captured cities.

I used to prefer to leave the new city and to ride or sail out to the ruins of Old Goa. The boats sail along a narrow strait, its banks covered with palms and verdure. Suddenly, the boatmen will put in at a quay beneath an old stone gate crumbling with age and neglect amidst the trees. Walking through this, one

may be allowed a thrill of emotion, for it is the famous gate through which each Viceroy passed when first he came from Lisbon to rule the Empire of the East. The old road is obstructed with creepers and blocks of masonry. In many places it is impassable, so that a new path has been trodden round, running through what was once the pleasure gardens of Portuguese grandees and their ladies. Only occasional heaps of mouldering stone show where the high walls used to be. It leads at last to the Great Square, where parades and ceremonies were held in the presence of the Viceroy, and where also, under the Inquisition, all-powerful here, many a cruel *auto-da-fé* took place. In those days the Square was surrounded by the most magnificent cathedrals and churches in all the East, served by hundreds of priests and monks.

But to-day the Great Square is a jungle; trees, shrubs and undergrowth entirely hide it. Many of the churches have crumbled away almost to their foundations; others survive, with a tower or the greater part of one of the walls missing. One of them, however, if I remember rightly, remains in almost its old bulk. Its bells still sound out the hours of prayer; masses are celebrated at its altars, and a dark-hued priest may now and then be seen noiselessly crossing its cloisters.

In the church of the "Good Jesus," the coffin of S. Francis Xavier, made of solid silver, survives amidst the general ruin upon a high pedestal of precious marbles and gold. And there is an old picture gallery in what remains of the Viceregal Palace, with portraits of all the Viceroys who reigned in Goa—stern, majestic men, with grand robes and hats, and the sceptre of office in their hands. The windows of this gallery are now almost choked by tangled creepers, which have even writhed their way inside until they touch the frames of the portraits. The whole palace is deserted, crumbling and decayed.

When the path from the waterside leaves the Great Square it comes out upon a rough cart-track. Here once stood the mansions of the richest European city in the East. Among the bushes you may find a rotting corner-stone engraved with the arms and name of some old Portuguese family. But the jungle is everywhere. You walk a few yards beyond the old Square and, looking back, you are confronted by an impenetrable tangle of leafy trees and creepers. Only in one direction there stands out the blackened and broken tower of the famous cathedral, forlorn against the tropical sky.

I do not think I had ever spoken to a Portuguese before I went to Goa, but this

did not prevent the police—the Portuguese police this time—from imagining that I was a spy in the service of the ex-King Manuel! I did not know of this until much later, and at the time I could not help being flattered by the amount of attention that the Chief of Police gave me. He introduced me into the bosom of his family; he invited me to take long drives with him all over his dominions; I watched him distributing justice and its local surrogates to the provinces and the towns—one day, I remember, three Indians were brought before him on a charge of theft; he could not satisfactorily disentangle the evidence to discover whether or not they were guilty, so he gave them the benefit of the doubt and banished them to the distant island of Diu, off the Kathiawar coast, for a lengthy period—we played poker together at the Club and I paid my hotel bill out of the winnings, thus doubtless confirming his worst suspicions of me.

It was a queer hotel that I stayed in at New Goa—the best hotel this time. My fellow-guests, chiefly young Portuguese officers and doctors, and myself would assemble on the veranda outside our rooms and discuss alternately political theory and why the hotel was so full of bugs, and if it was really healthy for the proprietor to keep pigs and chickens in the kitchen. In the early morning we would

lean over the railings and watch the pigs of the town cleaning the streets, while the inevitable Indian crows would dodge behind us and caw triumphantly as they set their feet in our teacups and carried off the bread on which our servants had just spread butter with their fingers, knives not being used in this process. Still, I think a stay in Goa gives one a better idea of what the old Portuguese conquerors achieved in their romantic Eastern Empire of long ago than a thousand books. And when, leaving Portuguese Goa, I climbed a mountain on the British frontier at Castle Rock, picking the leeches off my leggings and rattling a stick to scare the snakes, and saw before me miles upon miles of green, palm-covered hills and valleys and plains leading towards the distant sea, I thought of all the maps I had ever seen in ancient books, for they looked just the same.

From Portuguese India I once went almost straight across the peninsula to French India and its capital, Pondichery.

If the conflict between Clive and Dupleix, the hero of Pondichery, must be regarded as in the main a struggle between the French and English nations for power in India, one must not overlook the essential difference in their aims. Clive's plan was simple and grandiose; with his forces he sought to destroy the power

of all other European nations in India. The Indians themselves and their future he left to the future itself to dispose of. But Dupleix (say his admirers), influenced by his Indian-born wife, sought a real alliance with the Indians which should be deeper and more real than mere military arrangements. It was his vision that the French should enter India not as conquerors, but as friends. But the French Government could not appreciate Dupleix's ideal. They even undervalued his success, and he was recalled in disgrace. When, soon after, broken-hearted and starving, the great Governor of Pondichery died in a Parisian garret, "I have sacrificed," he said, "my youth, my fortune and my life to amass honours and riches for my country in Asia." Clive, his rival, triumphed in his fall, but not for long. He, too, lived to see his services turned against him, to suffer disgrace and perish in misery.

The tragic glory of Dupleix still broods over Pondichery. His statue stands there, raised upon some carved pillars taken from a ruined Indian temple; in view of his record, this seems an apt memorial. The little province, now only a hundred square miles in extent, still remains a French possession. By treaty, no soldiers may be stationed there, nor forts built. But in all other respects the nationality

of Pondichery remains intact—so much so that, in contrast with the neighbouring cities and territories of British India, it seems still to be slumbering in the eighteenth century.

This one notices immediately on arrival at Pondichery. Coming from the bustling comforts of Madras, you look round for a carriage, perhaps even a motor-car, to take you into the town. But there are no such vehicles for hire. There is only an amazing contraption called a " pousse-pousse," that is, a " push-push." It resembles equally a bath-chair and a railway trolley, and has the defects of both. It has a seat for two, an awning to keep the sun off, a long handle protruding in front, four small wheels and no springs. You get in—with your luggage if there is room—and a lean coolie drags you by the steering-pole in front, while two or three of his fellows push behind. The speed of this ludicrous vehicle is not much more than two miles an hour. It is so clumsy that the fare suffers excruciating discomfort at every step and, especially, at every turning.

There is not much to admire in Pondichery to-day. In the library, with its cool, green courtyard, there are to be found rare and interesting books and manuscripts. And, as Pondichery is a free port, there is a curious market of scents and brandies at one end of the town, where much business is done. The

most remarkable feature of the town is that it has become a city of refuge for political offenders fleeing from British India. Dozens of these men have escaped into Pondichery. Some of them have fled from the death sentence, others from the certainty of long terms of imprisonment in the desolate Andaman Islands. The French Government refuses to surrender these refugees, and they remain in this little town, their every movement watched and reported by the British police. These make no secret of their business. They have an office in the city, and their agents are everywhere. Extraordinary tales are told of plots and decoys and forged letters to tempt the refugees across the British frontier to their own undoing.

I counted a round dozen agents of the British police squatting on their haunches at the street corner, when I went one day to call upon Arabindo Ghose, perhaps the most tragic of all Indian revolutionary figures. A man of brilliant European education and promise, circumstances have turned him into an intensely unhappy and embittered person. He is a handsome, wild-eyed man; in appearance he greatly resembles the portraits of Robert Louis Stevenson. But when he speaks it is as if all life had gone out of him. My memory of him is of a man who had no longer any

hopes or any plans, but was given up to brooding on his lost endeavours. No reforms, no concessions, one feels, could ever satisfy this man. Indian revolutionaries make me despair. Agreed that most of them have suffered greatly and often unjustly, that many of them have been the victims or the witnesses of stupid tyranny, surely they cannot imagine that India, a congeries of hostile races, creeds and nations, a country where to this day most of the bloodshed that occurs is due to inter-racial riots, could know a day's calm without European keeping of the peace. England, at a price, has given the teeming millions of India peace, security and an end of inter-necine intolerance; this has been a fair trans-action in which, on the other side, merchants —very many of them, by the way, not English —have got the profits, and our Civil Servants have given their lives, careers and health.

II

KASHMIR

A CONTEMPLATIVE CHAPTER

FROM Pondichery, the warm weather approaching, I made my way northward to Kashmir, where I proposed to take a houseboat and sail along the glorious Jhelum River. I got a houseboat at Baramula, the entrance to the valley of Kashmir, and a day or two later I was floating in it across the great Wular Lake, poled by a dozen coolies. Above the marshy banks and little fleets of fishing boats towered range upon range of mountains, the wooded summits of the nearer just sprinkled with snow, farther off the gigantic forests of deodar and pine standing out from a gleaming white floor. Behind these rose thousands of mighty Himalayan snowfields—peaks, glaciers and slopes, indistinguishable at last from the high, hovering clouds. In all this enormous circle there was only one small gap, and even there, many miles behind the rest, a faint grey tinge separated snow from cloud. Overhead a

tropical sun glowed, and bulbuls and sparrows and great butterflies fluttered from the shores to perch on the warm veranda of the boat.

That was in the midday warmth of the Kashmir sun. But, next morning, as I looked through my window shivering with cold, we were passing up the swift Jhelum, muddy with the frothy lumps of unmelted snow. It was raining, and the outlines of the opposite bank and a few leafless trees stood out sharply against a near expanse of mist. But midway down this mass there was a great rift, through which I could see the higher slopes of a mountain, streaked with snow like veined black marble. And now the cloud sealed the gap and the struggling light disclosed nothing but a little hamlet, its lonely farms and cottages surrounded by thin, straight poplars with their young leaves and the white and pink blossoms of fruit trees. My head boatman yelled hoarsely at the trudging coolies on the towpath, and the heavy houseboat swung slowly round a bend. For a moment, in the clearness below the mist, I seemed far away to see a town and a fortified hill. I wondered if it was Srinagar, the capital of Kashmir, but we turned another bend and I could see eastward no more. A canoe sped past downstream, built like all native boats in the East, long and thin, flat-bottomed and roofed with

strips of matting sloping down on either side. A white-bearded, turbaned old Mussulman smoking his hookah in the prow pulled up a length of the matting to gaze curiously at my ponderous boat and at me, as I sat in bed by the open window. He raised his right palm to his bowed forehead and gave me a guttural greeting. I hastily returned his salaam. In the stern of the canoe the sides were coiled up and I saw his wife steering with a paddle. She observed me, and quickly covered her head with a fold of her long garment. For all her low degree, she was too proud to allow an infidel to gaze upon her handsome aquiline face, not even through the long ribboned plaits of dark hair that fell across it. The boat was loaded with stone, but at the back I noticed a small calf and scores of chickens.

Through the window on the other side of my room a little shepherd boy smiled down from the bank. He wore a close-fitting little cone for a head-dress and a single colourless garment with long sleeves, which he had rolled up to the wrists after the cold of the night. "S'laam, Sa'b," he piped in the midst of his sheep and tiny lambs. "Sa'b, Sa'b, S'laam," still more shrilly. "Salaam," I replied, and he laughed for joy. The mist was rising quickly now beneath the sun, and the

flat meadow-lands all round us stretched between groves of thin, leafy poplars, blossoming fruit trees, mighty plane trees as yet leafless, and stunted mulberry trees, far across the valley to the feet of the surrounding Himalayas.

In the afternoon my cook's assistant asks permission to fetch butter from a large village we are approaching. I propose to accompany him, and we step into the dinghy and are paddled to land. The village is built upon unlevel ground, and the streets wander up and down in all directions. About twenty young men of the village, stalwart and handsome, accompany us to the little booths where meal and grain are stored in large earthen pots, and beside blocks of sorrel-coloured salt a few lumps of grey butter are floating in a bowl. The owners, in every case hoary, cheerful old Mohammedans, salaam me repeatedly and make their sons fetch out a chair for me to sit on. Meanwhile, the butter easily obtained, my retainer tries to purchase a chicken. We wander through the village with our bodyguard; the pariah dogs bark and howl, herds of little Indian cows scamper in from the pastures in a cloud of dust, but no chickens can be spared. One is found at last, and is offered at the extortionate rate of eight annas. After consultation we decide to take it, but, just as we are counting out the thirty-

two farthings, the owner retracts, snatches away the squawking fowl, and runs off in the dusk. The crowd laughs and we all stroll back to the river-side.

Three or four youths volunteer to paddle us after the houseboat, and, as we slowly make our way against the swift current, the servant tells me of himself. He is a lad of nineteen, willing and sensible, and, he proudly declares, is really a farmer, not a servant. But produce is too plentiful and cheap, and four months' labour in the year is only enough to pay for fires; the results of another four months go for food, so he has become a servant for his belly's sake; and he pats it in Oriental fashion. His wages, by the way, are nine rupees—twelve shillings—a month. He is amazed at the amount of milk and butter to be obtained from English cows, and wonders still more when I tell him that they are thrice the size of their kind in India. The lights of the houseboat come into sight round a bend; we tie up the dinghy, and the young men from the village start off back across the fields, happy with a couple of annas as a present.

As the sun sets, the snow of the mountains grows greyer and greyer beneath the green paleness of the cloud-brushed sky. All becomes dark and chill. Suddenly a storm bursts upon us; a biting wind shrieks through the planes

and the whirled poplars; the river rushes down in waves, and the boatmen run yelling for refuge to the cook-boat. The houseboat sways and creaks under the shelter of the high bank. A minute later the wind ceases to blow, and at once the brown river flows smoothly along, reflecting the great stars that fill the sky.

The broad brown Jhelum flows down the valley in bends and curves between the mountains. At length we approach the Takht-i-Sulaiman, a tall, gaunt hill detached from that small interior range, now almost bare of snow, which overtops the east of Srinagar. On the summit is a small domed Hindu temple, the landmark of the "City of the Sun" throughout the Happy Valley. Between the river and the foot of the hill, and for half a mile up and down the narrow embankment, are the European quarters. From this pathway steps, wooden or cut into the bank, lead down to the scores of houseboats and canoe-houseboats, large and small, clean and dirty, that bask below, the owners of these devoutly believing that the broad bronze plane trees and the poplars of the embankment a dozen yards to the northward shade them from the noonday sun!

Just above the British Residency—Kashmir is a Native State—is a bridge crossing a little

HOUSEBOAT AND DINGHY IN KASHMIR

THE RIVER FRONT AT BENARES

canal which leads to the Chenar Bagh and the Dal Lake. Below the Residency is a small island abounding in fruit trees and chenars. It belongs to a fakir who lives there in a hut and exacts toll from every boat that moors against it. Behind the island and for half a mile below are the various " European " shops —Parsi, Kashmiri and Punjabi firms.

Below these shops lies the native town with its seven bridges. The first—but, heh ! Sultana, Ramzan, Mohamdoo, bring up the dinghy ! There are shouts in the cook-boat and the rattling of paddles, and a small dinghy manned by five cheerful, lazy rogues comes up to my window. I clamber into the bows of the dinghy, settle down on the cushioned seat under the shade of a double awning, and am paddled rapidly away by the men behind me.

The first bridge is about a mile from our houseboat, which we have moored opposite the Residency on the other side of the river in the grateful shade of a grove of poplars, now well in leaf. As I come swiftly round a bend in the dinghy, towering above on every side are gaunt black mountains surmounted by snowy ranges and peaks, grey in the shade of the dark rain-clouds or gleaming white where the sun breaks through to them. I pass under the bridge beside a Kashmiri poling a raft

of three gigantic logs, while two gaily dressed veiled women, harlots, are slowly paddled upstream. Canoes, laden with grain, timber, or stone, are gliding in all directions, each with a little covered space astern for the boatman and his family; and there is usually a calf in a closely fitting hutch.

On the left, divided from the Chief Minister's bungalow by a high-walled garden, is the Maharajah's new palace, built sheer upon the bank, a white, three-storied building with bay-windows and balconies projecting over the stream. Two or three staircases run along it down to the water. Adjoining it is an old red palace, towered and balconied, and connected by a passage-way with the oldest building of all, a palace in ruinous decay. Between the two the Maharajah's private temple stands out into the river, high up on the wall, with a large gilded dome glorying in the sunshine.

Along the banks are the decrepit wooden houses, leaning one on another, for the most part thin and narrow, but three or four stories high—regular poplars among buildings—with blossoming fruit trees growing out of the rubble of the lowest story. Long green grass grows on all the roofs; when pastures are bare, the sheep are hoisted up past the protruding bow-windows and latticed balconies on to

these tiny plots. Thirsty cattle stumble down to the water by the crumbling flights of steps that run between the houses and barns, amid the howling and fighting of mangy mongrels. Chattering old women crouch down to clean brass pots with the wet mud; others dip clothes in the stream and tread them out on a smooth stone, or, in the more usual fashion, slap them down on the rock until the buttons, the stitches, and sometimes even the dirt disappear. A group of elderly Brahmins stand on a terrace beneath a little tin-roofed temple. The old men shiver as they look at the cold river, and finger the sacred thread that hangs over their shoulders. Suddenly there is a splash and, a moment after, I see a dripping worshipper puff his way out of the water. Naked children play in imitation about the steps, the younger howling dismally as they are slowly cleansed and ducked, all in the chill breeze blowing down from the snowfields. I notice one lovely little house in fair repair. The top story is green, the next pink, the lowest blue, and it stands on a bare brick wall supported by piles, as are all the houses that project over the river. On the side of the house are painted two large pink and white storks. Each story has four or five bow-windows, with latticed shutters tumbling on their hinges. I pass little temples with glitter-

ing domes of tin and with vermilion dragons splashed uncouthly on the plaster walls.

Through one of the arches of the second bridge I can see the domes of a couple of Hindu temples, the wooden pagoda-shaped pinnacle of a Moslem mosque and the green-roofed houses on both banks seeming to meet at a bend. We pass a boat propelled by only one boatman travelling very slowly down-stream, laden with several generations of a prolific Hindu family. On the bank some Brahmin babus are checking the weighing of loads of timber. The houses are very much bigger now, mostly of four stories, raised on piles above the high bank. Sultana raps twice with his paddle, and with a cry of "Shabash" —"Hurrah"—we sweep down between the wooden piles of the third bridge into the very midst of the merchants of Srinagar. The tall old buildings have signboards hanging from their balconies and bow-windows. One old-established merchant, Sufdar Moghul by name, was nicknamed "Suffering Moses" long ago by a British subaltern—Lord Roberts, according to tradition—and has used the profitable designation ever since, to the envy of his competitors; on his signboard his real name is painted so small beside his pseudonym as almost to be hidden by it. Further on, a certain Gani masquerades as "Ganemede."

And on all sides I hear the cry, "Sa'ib, Sa'ib, come and see my shop, wood carving, shawls, papier mâché, me got very nice, come see, not buy, just see." Several dinghies dash out from the stony mudheaps of landing-places to intercept me, but my boatmen, unwillingly regardless of offers of enormous commission if they will take me to the shops, paddle me swiftly to my destination, the house of the merchant and banker, Abdulla Shah.

The steps that lead up to his shop are dangerously decayed, but, with the aid of a walking-stick, I succeed in climbing them and enter the courtyard. Round it on three sides is a large tumble-down two-storied building. Two verandas, cut off by broken lattices, project over the river. The banker, a small, dark, aquiline Persian, one of the wealthier men of the country, is dressed in European style. His frock-coat is brushed, his linen spotless, and his socks are discreetly dark in colour—each with a large hole at the heel.

He invites me to ascend a dark rickety flight of stairs at one side of the building, and he and his sons and servants show me embroideries on wool, silk and finest lawn, carpets from Bokhara, numdahs from Yarkand and Khotan, tea, turquoises, copper and gold from Tibet, designs in silver and enamel, and large Kashmir shawls, some that will pass

through a ring, and some old, heavy and red, of which the secret has been lost. On the other side are rooms full of carving in walnut wood—seven-foot screens, folding Koran-stands made of one intersected piece, tables so delicately worked as to glint as if a tray of brass were inlaid, chairs, cabinets and boxes, worked with leaves and flowers and the fearsome dragons and hieroglyphics of the famous Lhasa patterns.

A little further on is the Jumma Masjid, the chief mosque of Srinagar, near the fourth bridge. It was meant to be constructed entirely of wood, but is only partly so. A square tree-shaded courtyard—a tangle of tall weeds and grass with a stone fountain in the centre—is surrounded by lofty cloisters supported by enormous pillars of the sweet-smelling deodar. Above the centre of each side is a latticed tower, shaped like two upper stories of a pagoda. Over each is a little fane of gold. All the ziarats, or mosques, of Kashmir are built after the style of the sides of the Jumma Masjid, which thus, to the Kashmiri, resembles a quartette of holy buildings. Clambering on hands and knees up a crumbling spiral staircase and through a small gap in the wall, I reached the roof of the cloisters and saw all Srinagar's tumbling houses with their bow-windows and grassy roofs and

balconies clustering round the highway of the town, the river. Below, the birds swept noisily through the leafy courtyard.

Returning upstream from the city to the houseboat I went on board for a while and then jumped into the smaller dinghy and paid out line from the stern of the houseboat until I ran ashore. I got out and found myself a dozen yards below the towpath. A few clutches, some slips, a final pull, and I landed on the top, just in time to see, a hundred yards in front, the tow-line of the houseboat suddenly spring taut and jerk three of the struggling coolies into the water. We all laughed; I, the cook, the other coolies, the victims themselves, the other servants and a dozen old men gossiping on the bank.

Everything amuses us on this journey: a boatman's bewilderment as his turban is jerked into the water or hung up upon a twig; my puppy, all forlorn, howling piteously in a self-induced marooning; the horror of a boatman supposed to be steering when he is prodded awake; the cook-boat breaking from its moorings and sailing away downstream with a paddleless cargo of servants and provisions; the boatmen's chase after it, the lassooing from the bank and the triumphant release of its excited crew and my tiffin. The head boatman, with a thousand ghastly threats

ringing in his ears, persists in palming off his mere coolie friends as skilled boatmen, and, taxed with proof of this, laughs gaily, swears he is my servant, cares for nothing but what is in my interest, and will do whatever I command, be it even to jump into the river. Upon the eighth repetition of this offer, I order him to jump.

Unperturbed, he gathers up his loose calico drawers and, with a tremendous yell, springs into six inches of water, a yard away. This is not good enough, I tell him; and he jumps again, this time into three feet of water. No sooner in and wet to the waist than he entreats me to order all the grinning onlookers to jump in too. In the consequent laughter and protests, all his deceits are forgotten, and the irrepressible rascal smiles joyfully at the antics of his clumsy subordinates.

A few days later I was sitting with my back against a willow beside a narrow bridle-path in an expanse of ploughed land, sloping down from some hills. Tied to another willow was my little grey Kashmiri pony, whose usual gait was a canter, with an occasional bolt or a relapse into a ghastly, meandering trot. It never learned to walk. As I rode into the village of Pampur early that morning from the boat I found a large assembly of villagers round a small, shady strip of common, en-

closed by ropes. Within were two Englishmen sitting at tables with large heaps of envelopes beside them. At first I supposed I had come upon an incredibly attractive missionary meeting, but I was quickly set right and informed that silkworm eggs were being distributed to the villagers for six weeks' rearing. The headman had just been admitted into the ring when my little pony sprang forward, scattering a portion of the crowd, and bolted off to the road. When I had reined it in, we were a quarter of a mile away, and I cantered off along an avenue of willows, cutting off a great bend in the river. Little groups from the neighbouring villages, hungry after silkworm eggs, passed me on the way, greeting me with a "Salaam, Huzoor"—"Welcome, Presence." Some old men cried out that God had sent the rain and made green the mulberry trees, and they wanted me to give them the eggs. I turned in my saddle and shouted to them to hurry to Pampur. We left the avenue for a village path, along which my surefooted pony galloped securely though it was raised on a high mound hardly a couple of feet broad. Some of the villagers on the river-bank had seen my houseboat pass two hours, one hour, five minutes before; others declared that no boat had passed at all this morning. I decided to ride two miles upstream to Latipur for

precise information. A mile along the willow avenue I dismounted. Fanned by the cool snow-breeze, I sat watching the ploughmen steer their rude ploughs behind the pairs of black bullocks, while little boys ran past me on the path driving a calf or a goat.

I remount and start off again for Latipur. The path comes out soon on the river-bank, and from a canoe being towed upstream, I learn that my large, clumsy houseboat is still in the big bend downstream. I gallop back to the village, but there is still no sign. The pony scrambles down a sheer bank on to a long, low silt beside the river; we canter for a mile along it and at last I see five of my coolies leaning gently on the tow-line, three more sitting, steering-paddle in hand, on the side-planks, and upstairs on the veranda, beneath the flapping canvas of the awning, Abdulla, my body-servant, white-clad and blue-belted, is arranging bunches of lilac and iris in vases. My groom is quickly landed in the dinghy and leads on the horse, while I, holding the saddle, take his place and am speedily pulled up to my window.

On the lawns of the valley amid the clumps of wild iris, purple, mauve and white, the sheep and goats pluck the juicy blades of grass. The handsome, loose-clad straw-sandalled shepherds, with large coarse shawls

flung about them, are sorting their flocks and urging them homeward, aided by the ploughmen returning from the fields, each with his earthenware-lined fire-basket slung over his shoulder. In the sunshine the grassy roofs of rambling villages peep through the trees that would seem so mighty, were they not dwarfed, as is everything in Kashmir, by the majestic background of cloud-burdened snowfields. Some little shepherd boys and a tiny maid approach me shyly with bunches of iris, followed by the anxious mothers of the lambs and kids they are carrying home.

And now I am sitting in a little orchard on the sunny mountain-side, overlooking the vale of Kashmir. Little blue patches and twirls disclose the rivers. Bright yellow fields of mustard and linseed dot the emerald meadows and purpling ploughlands. Long lines of green show the poplar avenues that traverse the valley, and at intervals there are villages surrounded by plane trees and poplars. At last in the distance all fades into a noonday haze at the foot of the distant black cloud-capped hills.

But is that cloud, or is it a snowfield seen through a rift? Then I begin to realise that there is only a thin strip of cloud lying across the mountains; above it, far above it, rise the peaks and the chasmy slopes. The

mountains "seem dancing with outspread wings."

The valley of Kashmir was once the bed of a gigantic lake for whose pent floods the gods, so the Hindus say, broke down the mountain barrier that filled the gorge of Baramula. Now, through numberless streams and lakes flow the waters of the valley, springing from the holy founts that roof the snake-god's underground palaces and from the trickling mountain rills on the edge of the mighty glaciers. Where the deep waters of the lake rolled in the mysterious Himalayan depths, now blooms a lovely sunlit land, cool with abundant breezes and streams. Imagine the English country-side, sunburnt, bright with bracing mountain air, its villages shaded by mighty groves, and peopled by a laughing shepherd-folk tending their flocks on grassy lawns beside the poplar avenues; imagine this, and you may realise a twentieth of Kashmir's beauties!

One morning I climbed the ridge above an orchard, beside which the houseboat was moored. For an hour I scrambled over stony watercourses—a nest of avalanches—full of yellow bushes and clumps of broom. Looking down I saw the vale of the Jhelum. At last I stood upon the summit. I saw impenetrable green pine forests covering range upon range

of hills. In the valleys between them dashed the noisy glittering streams of the rocky Liddar. The land seemed stony and bare, except where a mighty grove of plane trees—noble, lofty masses of emerald leaves and russet berries—shaded a few houses and barns clustering round a spring. The pilgrims' road to the distant shrine of Amarnath, marked by rows of willows and poplars, led away through the villages past the pine-clad hills up to the snowy cave beneath the two peaks that tower over the vale, reflected in its countless blue streams. Turning, I saw this rugged Liddar valley, merging into the serene province of the Jhelum—the true vale of Kashmir. I could see how it gradually lost its wildness; as it broadened, one saw tiny patches of meadow and ploughland between the village groves. They grew larger and larger, and the tracery of their borders wound more fantastically. The last green pine-clad hill ran down to the pilgrims' avenue; and, then, but for the river crashing along its stony bed, the valleys were joined indistinguishably. Larks and blackbirds sang around me, and birds flew past in flashes of orange, green and blue. A little yellow-breasted bulbul fluttered up to me, inclining his impudent head with its curious bedraggled crest, less timid than a robin on an English lawn.

In Kashmir the blue sky is rarely cloudless with the monotonous cruelty of India. Often, lying in this upland orchard, shaded from the sun by a young plane tree, I have watched a storm sweep over the Jhelum valley. A grey transparent mist shrouds the distant peaks, draping more densely the diminutive lands beneath. Thousands of little silver flecks show where the rain is flowing away. The veil floats along the mountains, and the peaks over which it has lain stand out cold and clear, rough with the pure new-fallen snow. Suddenly it expands as it leaves the range, and comes nearer over the valley. A cold wind springs up and shrieks through the grass and the trees, humbling the purple irises ("grave-flowers," as the Kashmiris call them) blooming above a Mohammedan burial ground. The shouting ploughmen thrash their bullocks to the shelter of the willow copses. "The sun grows pale with obscured rays; the birds begin to cry in shrill tones, and dreadful sounds ring through the sky." The heavy raindrops patter down on the shivering leaves of the trees, and through the shower I can dimly see the white snowflakes falling on the peaks above. The rain falls more softly, more slowly, as the sun shows it streaming down; it ceases, little by little, and the sun's warm rays light up the jewelled grass and the wild

flowers; the birds sing again, and the little blue rivulets clatter down the fragrant mountain-side.

Below the orchard is the village of Bhawan, a Hindu "tirtha"—the site of a holy tank. At the foot of the hill is a small domed temple, about twenty feet high, within which is a small white marble image of the Sun-God upon his fleet-horsed chariot. Near the temple, on one side, are two red-painted embossed images, one of Hanuman, the monkey-god, the other a small stone with a snake carved roughly upon it. Three or four crumbling stone steps lead down to a small square tank filled with clear water from a spring beneath the shrine. A plank leads over the little canal that joins this to a larger stone tank, surrounded by houses for pilgrims; the approach to the spring from the village is through a grove of plane trees, whose leafy branches mingle into a cool, sighing roof. In the tanks are thousands of holy fish, greedily following the pilgrims as they walk solemnly round, and fighting in a thick, struggling mass, like a swarm of bees, for a cake of flour piously thrown to them. Beside the plank, beneath a huge old tree, leafless in this bower of greenery, sits an elderly Sadhu, covered with dust and ashes, with his begging-bowl beside him. I do not know which Yoga he is following, or even

whether he is an ascetic or a fraud. He did, indeed, greet me with a noisy song and an outstretched palm when I rode in from Islamabad one evening a week ago; but now that I come every day, he recites to me instead the praises of distant Amarnath, which he visits in the autumn with thousands of other Sadhus from the plains of India. Now, in the spring, the path is impassable with snow. Yesterday, when the old Yogi had spoken to me, he rose stiffly from the position he had sat in all day, and repeating holy texts, shuffled with difficulty round the tank. First, walking over the plank and dropping a speck of ghee, sacrificial clarified butter, into the water, he approached the red-painted Hanuman and dabbed on his nose a tiny speck; he did the same to the four-armed god behind; then he climbed the steps to the temple, and, knocking twice on the locked door and calling to the god within, he placed the holy morsel on a protruding board. He passed down to the snake stone, and placed the ghee on the top. Then turning to the fishes in the smaller tank, he offered them the remaining portion, smiling and pointing his lean forefinger as a greedy brute leapt up and swallowed it. All his offerings together had not covered his thumbnail.

Half a mile away, where the avenue turns

round the base of a rugged limestone range into the Liddar valley, there is a small village from which a decrepit zigzag path leads up the face of the hill to an ancient cave temple. As I paused breathless at a locked door cut in the very rock, a Pundit, with his yellow caste-marks carefully painted on his forehead, hurried up after me. Like all Kashmiris he wore over all his other clothing a long outer garment with its sleeves hanging empty. This clad him from his neck to his feet, and beneath it he held his bulging earthenware fire-basket, filled with live coals. Coming up with me, he salaamed, and after the usual frantic attempts to find his sleeve, his hand came out into the afternoon with the key. I entered a dark, lofty cave. The Pundit set fire to a handful of twigs for a torch, and, stumbling up some broad stone steps, I could see the shrine, cut completely away from the sides of the cave. It had been roughly shaped and polished into the usual trefoil-arched pyramid-roofed cell, and contained a small lingam. I scrambled round the sacred stone on a narrow path that was covered with loose stones, a sure sign that no one came there now to walk round it in worship. The Pundit guided me out of the cave and down through the village to another cave a few hundred yards away. A stony pathway led up from the road to an almost

invisible arched doorway upon which was carved a lotus. The Pundit bent down and shuffled backwards through the hole holding out the rekindled torch to light me. I followed him cautiously. The passage was about two hundred feet long, sometimes barely three feet high, and always only just wide enough to let us crawl through. At last it led into a round domed chamber, in which squeaking bats fluttered about in terror. The Pundit showed me a recess, where there lay two or three bones of a Sadhu who had died there. All round little drops of water fell from the rough black walls. We crouched down and groped our way out, with the frightened bats dashing in our faces, and passed out of the dismal passage into the charming groves of Bhawan.

A mile away, high up on a little shelf on the mountain-side, stand the ruins of Martand. Alone among the ancient Hindu temples of Kashmir, this possesses cloisters and colonnades and exterior recesses and shrines in addition to the cella. Standing beneath its trefoiled arches among the mighty masses of stone that once were noble columns and tanks, I gazed along the fertile land from the valley of Kisthwar, far away in the east, to the snowy streak in the sky which is the western border of Kashmir. Such is the mighty view

from this ruined temple, which even now, roofless, broken and desolate, its doorways shattered and its pillars fallen, is a proud trophy of Hinduism in this Mohammedan land. Even the watchman of the temple is a Mussulman, with all his fellow-villagers, who lazily sing and pipe amidst their flocks along the meadows beneath the ancient walls; tenderly bearing forlorn lambs, they hunt the stray ewes out of the ruins, crying shrilly after the beasts as they leap across the mighty blocks of stone.

Every ruin in India has its watchman or "chowkidar," who lives on the tips he receives from visitors and on whatever work he can do in the neighbourhood of his charge. Knowing usually just a little of the history of the place, these men insist upon declaiming it, and expect a few annas baksheesh for their often unwelcome assistance. And lest he should lose the post on a complaint, each keeps a book for the notes and recommendations of visitors. At Martand, amid a colourless host of remarks in this style: "Anwar Mir, chowkidar, showed us round the ruins to-day and was very polite," I found an occasional sparkle of humour: "Anwar Mir, chowkidar, opened two gates for me satisfactorily, for which I gave him four annas." "Mr. Justice Blair Hering outside his jurisdiction could not do justice to this

abominable nuisance who dogged his steps"; and from a warmly welcomed Babu, "This man is a gentle hospital." In the faded pages of this visitors' book also I discovered traces of a terrific controversy of many years ago.

A certain old gentleman, Colonel Coburn, who, besides his other activities, started a timber firm and a visitors' agency, claimed in ten scratchy pages of hysterical Christianity that the Kashmiri Hindus (most of them now forcibly converted to Mohammedanism) were originally Jews who had fled from Palestine after the Crucifixion, and that they had built this temple after the style of that in Jerusalem. Thus he explains to his "dearly beloved brothers and brethren in Christ" the faithlessness and treachery of the modern Kashmiri.

"If," concludes the old gentleman, "you should find a wounded viper lying on the road, do all you can to care and restore it to life, for he will be grateful to you for it and repay you the debt of gratitude he owes you for what you have done for him, but if you find a Kashmiri in the same condition, get off your horse and kill him outright, for if you do him a good turn and save him, he is sure to be ungrateful and do all the damage he can in return! But all the fingers of one's hands are not the same length, as a native saying here is, and there are many noble exceptions

to the above rules, and a good Kashmiri servant, like a good Scotch or Irish tenant out of their own countries, is about the best one can find."

On the next page I found this comment from "A Kashmiri Pundit": "I have read with interest the funny remarks of Col. Coburn about these ruins and the origin of the Kashmiri Pundits. After reading those remarks I am disposed to reverse Darwin's theory and hold that people who live to a great age are likely to pass down into the same animal to whom Darwin has traced the genealogy of mankind."

But I much preferred the statement of an English traveller, a little later in the book: "Very interesting ruins, but saw no Jews at all."

III

ON THE TIBET ROAD

AFTER I had spent some time exploring the delights of Kashmir, I joined a couple of English friends who were about to undertake a journey along the road that leads into Tibet.

We had, of course, no intention of following the road to its limit; but we anticipated an interesting trip through the heart of the Himalayas. We started off one day from the end of the Wular Lake with a little company of servants and ponies, the latter bearing our supplies on their backs. After two days we had definitely left the valley of Kashmir behind and were well into the mountains. After climbing a great deal we passed beyond the altitude where the last trees grow. We came out of a fragrant pine forest upon a great white shoulder of a snowfield. We could hardly bear to look at the mountains, so dazzling was the snow upon them, and we had to put on our snow-goggles. A well-worn line of tracks showed the road, and another,

rising more directly and steeply through the snow, the short cut. We trudged up the shorter way, pressing the soft flakes beneath our feet into little lumps of ice. Sometimes they melted away under us, and we slipped down the cold, moist slope; and now and then we fell up to our waists through the crust of a concealed ice-hole. The worst was that we were exposed all the time to the heat of the tropical sun, which burned our bodies despite the surrounding expanses of snow. And it was melting the snow to such an extent that we never knew how to walk. At one step our feet would fall through deep into the snow; the next would hold firm; and the next would drop us in to our waists. It was a wearisome business. The ponies with our baggage whinnied uneasily as their legs slipped across the ice or fell into the dips. The six ponymen, one to each three horses, led them on with a monotonous cry of, "Hoosh, khubadar!"—"Hoosh, be careful!"—"Hoosh, khubadar!" But at last we reached the summit of our first serious pass, and knew that we were definitely on the famous Gilgit road.

I know no road like the Gilgit road—a path that winds through the pine woods of Kashmir, crosses in far-away valleys scores of rivers and little streams by stepping-stones or rude

bridges of logs or even a single unsmoothed tree-trunk, and grips its way through the steep slopes of everlasting snow, despite blizzards, mist and avalanches, until at last it comes to the desolate distant little outpost of our Indian Empire, where it meets the Russian and Chinese frontiers. Up and down this road the postmen have to scramble in all sorts of weather, carrying the daily post to Gilgit by two-mile relays. Sometimes we found the road lying across an icefield, underneath which a stream tunnelled its way; then the road and the stream would come out into sight, criss-crossing each other by dangerous little ice bridges; then we would come to pine forests where we would find our camp pitched near a clear stream, from which we would drink, meeting there wild-looking men from the remoter valleys—true Mongolian and Tibetan types, in fur-lined Pushtu coats and round, woolly caps. Flocks of sheep and goats would be feeding there, tended by little shepherd lads.

In one valley a horrible icy wind seemed to be blowing continuously across the plough-lands, even when the midday sun blazed down on the boulders and the dazzling white blocks of quartz. We camped there for three days beside the river, near a crazy wooden bridge, the whole centre section of which rested un-

fastened on the two abutments in order that in a flood it might be immediately swept away without wrenching the foundations, which were securely buried in the banks. After the flood, a new centre-piece could be quickly built and laid upon the sides again. Then we moved up the valley to a place more sheltered from the wind by the mountains. We pitched camp beside a wooden mosque under some mighty elms. The mosque was pagoda-roofed and walled with smoothed logs and latticed windows; it stood in an untended garden full of weeds and wild flowers and enclosed by a high fence. A dozen ragged white flags waved on a platform, and strips of cloth and paper were tied across the doorways. Within was a saint's tomb, made of rounded stone and covered with a dingy awning.

A few days after we left this place I lost my nerve. It came about in this way. We had been marching along a valley for a few hours on smooth turf, crossing by insecure bridges of tree-trunks many streams of melted snow dashing down the nullahs. As I came out above a village, I saw the servants pitching our camp on a small grassy meadow that jutted out from the mountain-side. I started to cross a steep, bare slope towards them in order not to have to descend to the village and then climb up again to the tents. Half-

way across, the path I had taken began to narrow, and at last it split into two or three goat-tracks, on none of which I could hope to find a foothold with my stiff rush sandals.

I stood there leaning against the slope, barely supported by the pressure of my instep on a ledge hardly an inch broad. My other leg hung loose. I tried to turn and get back along the path, but, as I moved, my foot slipped off the ledge and I found myself lying flat on the steep face of the slope. Below me it ran sheer down three or four hundred feet to the stony river-bed, where the tossing river dashed against the timbers of the little bridge that led across to the wooden houses of the village. There was nothing to clutch but rare and vain blades of grass. I tried to dig my fingers into the soil, but it was too hard; nor could I do anything but press my bare knees and elbows hard against the slope. I knew that if I relaxed my pressure, I should slide down the hill-side in an instant.

I had no fear at all, for I did not believe it possible to die then. With my cheek rubbing the soil, I shouted, and at once I saw a man in the village far beneath come out of his house by one of its little shuttered openings, look up and immediately rush off to my rescue. He came tearing up the wall of rock, leaping barefooted like one of his goats. "Sahib!

Sahib!" he screamed, with tears of excitement running down his face.

Then I felt as if I were slipping, appallingly slowly, not by distance but, so to speak, by degrees of relaxation. I clung looser and looser; still I could not dig a grip with my finger-nails. Soon I must slip a twentieth of an inch, then a quarter, then an inch, then—three hundred feet. The man came up nearer with hideous grimaces and cries. I thanked Heaven he was a villager and not a timid Kashmiri of the town. My knees went at last, and, with a scrape, my body tautened, my elbows came away from the soil, and, just as my whole body commenced to move, the villager reached me and clasped me firmly by the hand.

Barefooted, he walked along almost with ease below the path, supporting me with his grip as I clambered back to it and along to the road. "Sahib," he sobbed, "this was not a path for sandals." Looking down, I found that my friends and one or two of our coolies had started to run to my rescue, but none of them could possibly have reached me in time. I had never doubted; yet my nerve was gone, and for all the rest of the trip I staggered and swayed on the narrow places when I started over them alone.

One of our marches led us through uncharted valleys, and we found that the usual

estimate of the mileage of the route was badly out. Instead of sixteen miles, as we had thought, we found we had to walk twenty-eight—a very considerable distance in a country where the sun makes all movement nauseous for five hours in the middle of the day, and the altitude, ranging from eight to fourteen thousand feet above sea-level, impedes easy breathing at all times. Marching is difficult and often dangerous in the snow, and at night-fall one would not dare to move a step. This march finished our coolies, who refused to go on. Climbing a hill over our camp, they stood there in a row with uplifted arms and cursed us with a long, rising wail, after which they sat down and made themselves a camp for the night. At dawn they silently departed, having arranged with the people of a neighbouring village to take over their job and to pay them their share out of the total amount received.

We started off next day with our new coolies, and found a long climb before us, which it was imperative to finish before noon, lest the afternoon should bring a storm and catch us in the heights. I was given the thankless task of bullying and blarneying the coolies into making all possible speed, and I discharged my duty at the expense of my strength, my wind and, if the coolies' repeated prayers had any effect, my soul's fate and that of all

my ancestors and descendants. However, we made camp in good time and weather, and the coolies forgot their troubles and sang folk-songs to me to show that they forgave me.

Two nights we camped on a bare patch of earth surrounded by miles of snow, while, near by, the rushing Mooshky River serpentined its way through the broad, level strip of ice deep in snow that was soon to be all melted into one mighty river. There were no trees, only a few rare stumps of rotting wood. Yet, strangely, we often heard the cuckoo's monotonous cry, and, by their chilly burrows down through the snow, brown-furred marmots watched us, sitting on their haunches and warning each other with shrill, bird-like cries.

The third night we reached a village that consisted of one building. A few Tibetans and their dirty children were sitting on its broad, spacious roof, which was only three or four feet above the surrounding earth. Inside was a big excavated chamber where they and their numerous herds of goats and bullocks slept in air-tight promiscuity. Their chief aid to agriculture was so plentiful that one of my companions remarked, "I have camped in running water, I have camped on the summit of a mountain and on the side of a precipice,

but never, never before have I camped in a dung-heap."

The two miles beyond this fragrant spot occupied us several hours, for an avalanche had destroyed the path, and we and the coolies endured some exciting rock-climbing and crossing of snow bridges that often bent and sometimes broke. Then, at last, we got down out of the snow and trudged through a dry, hot valley. We passed by Mooshky and three or four other villages, each with its carefully enclosed treasure—two or three shrivelled, leafless juniper trees. Then a decayed mud fort came into sight, and a couple of small brick buildings and two or three mud huts. This was Dras, which the Tibetans call Hembabs.

There was a young lieutenant of the Guides in camp at Dras, bearded like the pard (and so were we, for who dares shave in that climate?), and full of brilliant military inventions. We spent the evening chatting in his tent, and rested at Dras with him the next day. Then he went on, Central Asia-wards.

At Dras we saw the first caravan of the year passing through to Central Asia. A slender, apricot-cheeked Yarkandi merchant was travelling with a score of ponies laden with stores for those desolate regions, whose very names we hardly knew. All along the road now we

met caravans of handsome white-capped Yarkandis and filthy, squat, pig-tailed Tibetans, some with a hundred loaded ponies, some with only a dozen. There were also many uncouth little parties coming in from Yarkand; from one I bought a quantity of dried Ladakh fruits, but I bargained in vain for some curious wooden bowls off which they ate. The Tibetans begged incessantly for matches, leaving their ponies and fawning upon us with their dirty hands outstretched.

We now set out to return to Kashmir. Our route lay through the Zogi Pass, which is the link between Kashmir and Central Asia. The pass has this peculiarity, that, though it lies above a big ascent from Kashmir, there is no drop at all on the other side, but the valley winds along quite levelly from Dras. We came up to it in a day, and traversed its difficult snows early the next morning. The summit of the almost ungraded snowfield can only be observed by the traveller by watching the direction in which the streams flow. Just at the watershed we met a high official of Ladakh, travelling with a large and picturesque retinue in palankeens and on decorated ponies. We began to descend to civilisation again, and at last we came to a path nearly free from snow, cut in the rock cliff of a winding gorge, lofty and bare. We

were reaching the point, famous throughout Asia, where the caravans, exhausted with their long marches through the Ladakh Steppes, win their first glimpse of the beauties of Kashmir.

The path led through occasional soft masses of snow to a projection in the bare, treeless rock. It was as barren a spot as any we had traversed. We turned the dingy corner and cried out in delight, for there, stretching beneath us, were the green mountains and meadows, sparkling streams, and sunny banks of flowers of the famous Sindh Valley. What a contrast with that accursed nullah of Gujrind, and the deep, soft snow of the Zogi Pass. We hastened down the wide circling path to the flowers and meadows and the bubbling streams and the shade of the mighty green amphitheatres of deodars, enjoying them all as if we had never seen such lovely things before. For the tribesman of Central Asia, coming here for the first time, it must seem a paradise.

Our journey was over. Two long marches through the lovely valley, a mad twenty-mile dash on a little village pony with a blanket for a saddle, two holes in it for stirrups, and a bridle of rope, a dark midnight paddle by dark canals and lakes, and, early one morning, I woke to find myself beside my houseboat on the broad Jhelum, a mile above Srinagar. No more for us the heat of the sun and the

furious winter's rages; no more the leafless junipers and the soft, deep, treacherous snow. Now I might lie beneath the plane trees and gaze over the sunny wheat at the distant snows, and my only curse was Beelzebub and his million winged subjects.

IV

SOUTH TO MALABAR

FROM Kashmir, coming south at last to the plains, I came again to Benares, the most beautiful city of the whole Peninsula. In India it is said that even the view of Benares is holy. This means to the Hindu simply what it says; to him the very sight of the town is sacred, and to look at it is an act of communion with the gods. And, indeed, there is something so remarkable about the view of Benares that it is not difficult to understand the Indian belief.

The broad Ganges sweeps past the town in a long and gradual curve. The right bank is almost bare of habitations, but on the left stands the famous town, the holiest in all India. Along its whole length, huge stone terraces rise from the water's edge, surmounted by tall palaces and innumerable temples. It is a point of honour among the princes and rajahs of India each to have his own gigantic palace here. Many of them, and the terraces as well, have sunk; and they slope, half

covered with water, into the river; but always behind them are others, higher and higher still.

As one looks across the swift, yellow waters of the holy river at the city on the opposite bank, these terraces and palaces seem to rise up out of the water to the skies. The towers of the temples, the great causeways leading from one terrace to another, the huge bulk of the palaces—all this enormous mass of stone, on which thousands upon thousands of people are moving, presents a picture the like of which is not to be seen elsewhere in the world.

Many of the terraces are bathing-places. Here are crowds of pious Hindus, men and women alike, standing waist-deep in the water and bathing themselves with all the traditional ceremony of mystic incantations and gestures. For many of the bathers, this is the sublime moment of their lives; at last they have succeeded in coming to Benares from the distant ends of India, perhaps on foot, perhaps even crawling on their bellies to win divine favours surpassing the ordinary, to wash away their sins at the most sacred spot upon the most sacred of all rivers.

When the pilgrims come out of the water, they take a turn upon the terraces, where they find very much to admire. Everywhere they see broad umbrellas made of rushes, under

which sit holy men—some of them with an arm withered from its being held continuously in the air for many years; others sitting upon a bed of nails with the points upward, to symbolise the fate of the old hero, Bhishma, who fell from his chariot with so many arrows in his body that they held him off the ground; others of the holy men are sitting in the blazing sun between four fires, suffering the intolerable heat patiently for days and even years. But, it is rumoured, many of these Yogis beneath their umbrellas or in the shade of some high palace wall owe their immobility and insensitiveness to nothing else than drugs.

Higher up the river-side, smoke is ascending from some heaps upon one of the terraces. This is a burning ghat, where the dead are brought and laid upon pyres. A special caste carries the corpses here and sets fire to them; the mere proximity of these pariah people would pollute a Brahmin beyond all other abominations.

Ascending the terraces and passing beyond, one comes to the city itself. Here are networks of busy streets, so narrow that in many of them two men cannot walk abreast. These streets curve and cross and narrow without measure. And every stone in them is holy. Here you will find a quarter full of cool dwelling-houses. You pass through an arch and come

to a temple; beside its doors is a street of vendors of brass gods and images. You go on and come to a neighbourhood where there are only greengrocers' shops. As you stop to look at the amazing variety of vegetables and fruits displayed, a holy bull angrily pushes you aside and fills its mouth with the juiciest greenstuff on the stall. The owner dares not drive it away as he would a common bull, but he shouts polite rebukes at it and tries very respectfully with the end of a stick to induce it to go elsewhere. Hindus who wish to perform a meritorious act buy a young bull-calf and, dedicating it to the gods, give it its freedom. It then wanders about the city, petted and fondled by all who dare to touch it; but no one may lay a hand on it for use. In the course of time the bull grows insolent with too much laziness and luxury. It is then that he will push men aside in the narrow streets, and perhaps even try to throw them down and gore them as well.

Hour after hour you may wander in the alleys and on the terraces of the Holy City. But often when you chance to emerge into a comparatively open space, you will be reminded by the sight of two tall, slender minarets that the Hindus can no longer claim Benares wholly for themselves. But even the insolent spires of Aurungzebe's mosque, overtopping all

the other towers, have come at last to tone in with the rest of the buildings of the city. The majesty of Benares still remains.

The first night I was ever in Benares, I was fortunate enough to witness the feast of the lanterns. After dark the ghats were filled with a throng of pious pilgrims. At a certain hour consecrated by prayer, everyone lit a tiny candle and set it floating upon the swift waters of the Ganges. If the light held out to the end, it was a good omen; if not, calamity might yet be averted by more prayers, penance and almsgiving. And so, after the utter blackness of the night, there came suddenly these innumerable flickerings on the water, almost lighting up the huge mass of the palaces beneath which we stood.

Again from Benares I zigzagged my way to and fro across the Peninsula, touching at the most interesting Indian towns and villages. I have a thousand memories of days passed in Indian temples whose massive walls, ornamented by thousands of sculptures and mouldings, kept out the scorching sun, and of evenings spent in primitive hotels and rest-houses and sometimes even in the homes of Indian friends, usually so carefully guarded from the visits of Europeans. At last I came to the extreme south, to the jungles and lagoons of Malabar, which have lately become

prominent in the news of the world in consequence of the outbreak of disorder among the turbulent Moplahs, the savage descendants of past generations of Arab traders, whose arrival upon the Malabar coast antedated by many years that of the first Portuguese and English vessels.

Imagine a narrow spit of sand covered with coco-nut palms; on one side of it the waves of the Indian Ocean are beating in a continual foam. Few boats would dare to put out from this shore, lest they should be caught in the surf and swamped. But barely fifty yards away, on the other side of the palm-covered spit, lies a vast and placid lagoon. The wind that is tearing the sea into fury is averted from the surface of the lagoon by the barrier of palms, but it sweeps over, a few feet above the waters, and fills the sails of numberless boats. The sea is desolate except for one or two daring fishing craft and a tramp steamer quite half a mile from the shore; but the lagoon teems with life, covered with the tracks of sailing-boats and canoes.

This propinquity of sea and lagoon is the characteristic of the coast of South-West India from a distance north of Cochin almost all the way to Trivandrum, the capital city of the State of Travancore. Sometimes the district is identified with Malabar; though

this is not quite correct, since geographically Malabar extends farther north and not quite so far south. Still the peculiarities of the country are so remarkable and so entirely different from other parts of India that it is not strange that this network of lagoons and canals has become associated with Malabar under the general name of the Malabar back-waters.

These so-called "back-waters" consist of a number of large lagoons—sometimes so broad that one bank is not visible from the other—and the innumerable canals that join them and intersect the palm-covered country all round. The brackish water steams in the tropical heat. The atmosphere of the whole country is insufferably hot, moist and unhealthy; this is tempered somewhat, however, by the sea breezes where these are not cut off by the palms. The huts of the inhabitants, built each in the midst of its little grove of coco-nut palms, lie as a rule only a few yards back from the water-side, and their canoes are dragged up near by on the mud of the banks. The people are fine examples of the Dravidians of Southern India; they are mostly Hindus, and have preserved the Hindu civilisation here to a large degree. Indeed, nowhere else in India is the absence of Mohammedan influence so conspicuous; what Mohammedans

THE MALABAR SHORE

A MALABAR GONDOLA

are found in Malabar are, except for a certain number of merchants and money-lenders in the villages and towns, the Moplahs, and even now, when their truculence is all that remains to show their descent, they are a constant source of worry to their quieter Hindu neighbours. The Hindus of both sexes are dressed only in a single cloth, which hangs from the waist downwards; but these descendants of the Arabs add a large and evil-looking knife to their costume.

The only practicable way to traverse the country is by water. There is communication by sea in occasional trading steamers that call on their journey round from Bombay to Calcutta, and vice versa. But what with waiting for a steamer and the unpleasant journey out through the surf, it is not surprising that the usual way of travelling is over the languid, steaming back-waters. One may travel in a "wollom," a canoe covered like a Chinese sampan with a superstructure of fibre wicker-work; in this very constricted vessel one is sailed in the open lagoons and punted through the canals. Malabar grandees travel in style in large wooden vessels built like houseboats, rowed by many men and known (Heaven knows why!) as "gondolas." Europeans for the most part, unless they have the patience and the tolerance for a "wollom,"

prefer, where possible, to journey along the lagoons in a motor-launch, three or four of which daily navigate portions of the back-waters. It was in these that I negotiated the route from Cochin to Quilon.

Cochin is the capital of the State of the same name, almost as insignificant now as it was important three centuries ago. The town lies on an island directly fronting the sea ; opposite, on the mainland, is Ernakulam, the terminus of a narrow-gauge railway from the interior. There is a British " town " on the Cochin island, as well as the Indian one ; and where the two towns meet the road is flanked by customs offices—British on the one side, Cochin on the other—and every rickshaw or other vehicle has to be examined.

Neither portion of Cochin presents much interest, if we except the Jewish colony in the Old Town, and the curious fishing nets in the European quarter. These latter are strange square contrivances fixed to long poles which are hinged upon a wooden structure. The net is allowed to remain for some time in the water of a deep channel close to the land ; then the fishermen on shore suddenly pull down their end of the pole, and the net comes up out of the water with its catch high and dry inside it. The " White Jews " in the Old Town are known throughout Malabar for their

light colour and for the antiquity of their settlement there. No one knows for certain when they came, or whence, or why. They have maintained their own quarter in the outskirts of the city, where they live in a somewhat primitive manner.

The difficulty the traveller finds in Cochin is that, while the motor-launch leaves from the Old Town, it is quite impossible to get reliable information in the British quarter about its departure. From the quay in the Old Town to the Travellers' Bungalow in the New Town, where I had spent the night after ferrying over from the railway station on the mainland, it was nearly half an hour's journey by a fast rickshaw. I made the journey in the morning, and gathered that the boat would leave at noon; so at noon I arrived on the quay with my luggage. Then I was told that the boat would not start till about two, perhaps later. It was useless to return to the New Town to lunch, and equally impossible to open my luggage and get at my own store of tinned provisions. There was nowhere in the Old Town for me to rest and refresh myself. I was hot and hungry and very unhappy.

Then one of the clerks in the motor-boat office—a "White Jew"—saw my plight and kindly offered to get me some lunch. I accepted gratefully, though without antici-

pating anything better than very poor stuff. But in about an hour's time he brought me an excellent dish of stewed chicken and rice, which I ate on the veranda of the ticket-office, beguiling the time by watching almost naked Hindus climbing up the tall, swaying palms and throwing down coco-nuts into the bushes below. They tied a long cloth round the trunk of the palm and used the loop to support their body; then, straining out against this cloth, they simply walked up and down the perpendicular stem of the tree.

When at last the boat was ready to leave, I found myself a seat at the prow under an awning so as to have the benefit of any coolness there might be in that sultry, steaming atmosphere. The only other European on board was an old soldier, in charge of several boxes of gold sent from a Madras bank to one of its branches; he had been dining unwisely, and was suffering audibly in the stuffy little cabin at the stern of the boat. The other passengers were a curious assortment; there was a Parsee lawyer from Bombay, who spent his time intently reading a Hindu scripture; several village storekeepers and merchants on their way back to their homes; a certain number of Goanese; and representatives of most of the other types of the neighbourhood. We started out at last with a tremendous hoot

of the syren, and began swiftly to skirt the shore of the lagoon.

When we had travelled a considerable distance we hove to. On a promontory near by there was a well-built little house with a flag hoisted upon it; as we looked, we saw men running to the water-side and launching a long canoe, in which they rapidly approached us. This was, I learned, the border of the two Indian States—Cochin and Travancore—and these men were the frontier officials. They were more polite to me as an Englishman than to the Indian passengers; however, as no serious case of contraband was detected, we soon proceeded. The lagoon narrowed, and we began to follow one of the principal channels into which it divided. It had been a torture in the lagoon to stifle in the appalling heat, but now we came to waterways where the sun's rays rarely penetrated. The water in front of us was absolutely still, but our wash sent great rolling waves to break upon the banks.

Sometimes we stopped in midstream—for the canals were too shallow and sandy for us to venture close in-shore—to disembark and take up passengers in canoes, a proceeding attended with tremendous excitement and trepidation. Especially when we got under way again and rocked their thin and fragile

canoes with our wash did the timid passengers show alarm, and with some reason, for, though crocodiles are as rare in these canals as they are swarming on the shores of the broad lagoons, there is always the possibility of being snapped up in the event of the canoe's overturning.

Towards evening, after one or two delays upon sandbanks, we began to near the end of the first part of our journey. The banks of the canals were lined with canoes, and on shore huts became more and more frequent among the palms. As we passed, with many blasts of the syren to clear our path, bands of children would run down from the huts and fling themselves on the painters of their canoes, lest our wash should carry these away; and the handsome, naked men and women looked up at us from their work among the coco-nut groves. At last we came into the straight channel which forms the main thoroughfare of the town of Alleppey, and ran in to the quay. There we disembarked, and I called a rickshaw, leaving my servant to follow me with the luggage to the Travellers' Bungalow.

My rickshawman was a fine tall fellow, and he started off at a quick pace. But in a minute or two he slowed down and began unaccountably to hobble along at little better than walking speed. At last I discovered the

cause. The rickshawman suffered from the curse of the district—" Cochin leg "—a disease which is, however, much more frequent in Alleppey than in Cochin itself. It is elephantiasis, which gradually swells and thickens a limb until it reaches the ghastly dimensions that have suggested its name. The inhabitants of Alleppey seem to be affected mainly in the leg, though I have seen men with the marks of the disease upon other limbs. Its extraordinary prevalence in the towns and villages of the back-waters is presumed to be due to the brackish water; and there is said to be no cure for it.

Practically all the rickshawmen at Alleppey are affected by this complaint, with the result that locomotion there is excessively unpleasant for both runner and passenger. But one has after all no impulse to move about at Alleppey. The Travellers' Bungalow lies on the seashore, beside the lighthouse and the jetty. The city itself stretches for the most part along either side of the main waterway, with occasional bridges over side canals; it is a clearing-house for the products of the interior, but there are no signs of life in the place itself.

There was already one Englishman in the Travellers' Bungalow at Alleppey when I arrived, and between the food that the bunga-

low cook sent in and what the other traveller brought with him and what I had with me we enjoyed a very satisfactory supper. He was the representative of a Calcutta firm of engineers, sent to report upon some draining operations in the neighbourhood. He explained to me that, just as the chief agricultural demand in Northern India is for irrigating machinery, in the south it is exactly the opposite which is needed. In the north there is not enough water; in Malabar there is a thousand times too much. He said that to reach his work he would have to take a canoe and travel in it along the back-waters for two or three days and nights, living on the provisions and soda-water he took with him, and sleeping in the boat, with heavy doses of quinine to avert fever. Travelling for this length of time in a canoe did not seem to him a very pleasant prospect, though he had made the journey several times before.

Early next morning I went on board another motor-launch, and we soon set out along the canal, southwards to Quilon. The general impression of this portion of the journey on the back-waters was that the big lagoons were for the most part behind us, while we were now traversing instead an intricate network of narrow and shallow canals. Every now and then, however, we would come out upon a

lagoon; and this succession of palm-shaded canals and palm-fringed lakes was perhaps the most beautiful portion of the whole journey.

Very frequently on the banks of the lagoons there would come into sight Christian churches, blazing white in the intense sunlight. Malabar, despite all its remoteness and wildness, is (numerically) the most Christian district in all India. This curious fact may be attributed to various reasons; there are, for instance, the old associations of Malabar with the early European adventurers, who, especially the Portuguese, forcibly baptised large numbers of the inhabitants into Christianity. The memory of the old settlements still lingers here, and Portuguese, Spanish, English and other missionaries are all active among the present population. And it may be noted that the very remoteness of Malabar is, perhaps, rather an aid to the missionaries and priests than a hindrance; they are better able to get into touch with their prospective proselytes and to turn to good account the official Indian encouragement which is given them in these parts.

At one fever-haunted little village a boat put off to us with a European passenger, who came on board and walked up to the prow where I was. He was dressed in a long coarse gown, wooden sandals and a sun-helmet. For

a long time I could not make out who he was or what his occupation might be. We tried to converse; he spoke in a language unintelligible to me, and I tried sentences in English and Hindustani in vain. We were nonplussed. Then, after a while, an idea seemed to strike him, and he began again. He began to point vigorously to himself, saying, "Ego, ego." After a moment of surprise, I understood that he wished to speak to me in Latin! This proved to be the only language we had in common, although, to be sure, my acquaintance with it had never been a speaking one, and was, besides, very rusty. However, he smiled and accepted my apologies, while I stumbled along as best I could. My servant made us tea, and we spent a curious afternoon talking Latin in the heart of the steaming, palm-encompassed canals of Malabar.

The new-comer proved to be a Spanish missionary; he had arrived on the coast a year or two previously, speaking no language but his own and the small Latin of his monastery. He had been sent among the inhabitants of the back-waters without assistance and almost without guidance, to live among them in their own conditions and to pick up their tongue as best he could. The heroism of this cannot be properly appreciated unless it be remembered that life here is

difficult for a European even under the most favourable circumstances. Yet this Spanish monk had come without any tropical experience to live in local huts, upon local food and water, without any European comforts, in one of the hottest, dampest and most feverish parts of the world. And he had succeeded.

Late in the afternoon we came to his destination, a village no more inviting than where he had come on board. He said good-bye and was rowed off to the shore, regarded with much contempt by a fat Hindu money-lender who was disembarking at the same place.

Not long afterwards we came out into a lagoon, on the far bank of which lay the town of Quilon; the palaces of the Maharajah of Travancore and of the British Resident face each other across this lagoon. Just as we turned into sight of them there came the noise of many oars, and the "gondola" of a local grandee pulled past us. The grandee and some of his suite were passing their time luxuriously inside the long cabin of the boat, while others squatted on its roof under umbrellas. Before they were well out of sight we had entered a narrow canal, and soon came to the landing-place at Quilon.

The interest of Quilon, in modern as in ancient days, lies wholly in its commerce. In

the old days it was the centre of the trade of the neighbourhood with the foreign merchant fleets; nowadays it is the terminus of a railway into the interior and across to the Madras coast. It has little charm of its own, and I was glad to leave it the next morning for Trivandrum, the capital of the Travancore State and the Maharajah's principal residence.

There is a route by canoe along the canals between Quilon and Trivandrum, but this journey lacks the beauty and variety of those waterways between Quilon and Cochin which I had just traversed. An alternative route is by road, and there is actually daily communication along it by motor-bus! I followed the latter course, taking care to secure a seat in the front of the vehicle beside the driver. Just as the bus was about to start, an Indian gentleman I had met the previous evening appeared and paid me the compliment of garlanding me; and I commenced the journey with several long strings of strongly scented yellow flowers streaming in the breeze from around my neck.

Our route led through forests, and we passed numerous villages. As we rattled down a well-wooded hill-side a small party of men came into sight in the distance, leading a young elephant which they had just captured. They had garlanded it lavishly and were treating it to

many delicious fruits and sweetmeats; and, as we learned afterwards, they were congratulating themselves on the good relations they had established with the young giant. Alas! when the elephant saw our omnibus charging down upon it, it trumpeted shrilly, flung off its guards, turned about and ran. We stopped at once, in order to give the men a chance to secure it. But they were already too late. The faster they ran after it, the faster it scampered away from them down the road by which they had come; and as it ran it tore off its garlands and trumpeted.

We took the disconsolate guards on board the omnibus and continued our journey southwards, with the young elephant pounding along a few hundred yards in front of us. It seemed as if the chase would end only in Trivandrum itself, since the animal was thoroughly scared and would not allow us to come up with it. But at last we came to a fork in the road. The elephant hesitated, and then lumbered up the road which was not the one we were taking. We dropped the guards at the cross-roads and went on our way, leaving them to follow the animal until its terror wore off and they were able to catch it again.

Towards evening we came to Trivandrum, a large and populous town; and I took up my quarters, as usual, in the Travellers' Bungalow.

And a few days later I made a journey, partly by bullock cart and partly by motor-bus—the Alpha and Omega of Indian travel—to Cape Comorin, the southernmost point of India. There at the extreme limit of the land, beside a holy and much-visited Hindu Temple, I had a sea bathe in a very sacred pool, which is, moreover, free from sharks. A Hindu would have accounted the whole journey along the back-waters and the roads from Cochin to Comorin as merely a troublesome means of attaining to the exquisite privilege of bathing in that sacred place.

V

IN CHINA AND JAPAN

I HAVE been in a certain number of Chinese cities, though never for very long; the most interesting of them that I know is Canton. The usual means of communication between Hong-Kong and Canton, away up the river, is by steamer—with the risk of pirates. A new alternative is provided by the railway which was built not long ago between the two cities. One day at Hong-Kong I decided to go to Canton by rail and to return by boat, railway travelling being as entertaining in the East as it is dull in the West. The attitudes and bewilderment of the passengers were a delight in themselves. And looking out of the carriage window, I saw a charming sight. An urchin was walking along the road beside the railway, in charge of a score or more of geese. He held out in front of him a long, slender bamboo pole from the end of which there dangled a tuft of appetising green-stuff; the geese were bustling along and jumping up at the bait. By this means the boy got them all together in front

of him and was able to drive them on quickly and easily.

Arrived at length at Canton, I hired a sedan-chair and was carried off into the town. It is an incredible city, full of incredible sights, incredible sounds and incredible smells. So narrow are most of the streets that two chairs can only just scrape past one another. Often indeed, when two chairs approach, one of them has to turn rapidly down a side alley to give the other room for passage. One realises the great advantage in Canton of the chair over all other vehicles when suddenly a main street is broken by a short flight of stone steps, after ascending which it goes on as before.

Such a maze is Canton, such a medley of colour and movement, such a welter of people, houses, shops, temples, flags, animals, dirt and smells that, after the established confusion of India or the bijou rectitude of Japan, it makes the traveller feel that at last he is in an utterly strange world. Banners wave from every shop; coolies push their way through the crowd with the name of their Guild written in huge white letters on the back of their coats; a dejected criminal is led along by armed jailors; officials are borne past in smart palankeens; vendors of food and sweetmeats add their cries to the Babel of noise. In the midst of

all this, your chair suddenly comes out upon a well-paved courtyard, in front of a temple. If it is a temple where foreigners are allowed, you will be able to enter and, if you wish, the priests will discharge a salvo of crackers and other fireworks in honour of the gods. At every few yards you pass a cook-shop. Outside hang rows of things to eat; chickens especially are displayed in this way, resplendent in a thick coat of varnish that will keep them for a long time in good condition. Of Chinese cookery it is unnecessary to speak here. America has taken it, or at least a form of it, to her heart, and Chinese restaurants are fast making their way in England also. But it would be difficult to get up an appetite in Canton. The crowds, the lack of space, the fetid air—all conspire against health. And the smells! The smells of Canton!

Never in my life had I imagined such smells. They are not simply unpleasant odours, to be avoided by turning one's face aside or by delicately holding a handkerchief to the nose. Cantonese smells are of abominable persistency. They will not be denied; in their intensity, they are almost to be seen and heard. They seem to enter by every channel of the senses, by every pore of the skin. After a few minutes in Canton, I had my handkerchief to my face,

ready at the first suspicion of a particularly bad smell to bury my whole face in it for as long as I could hold my breath. I did this with some success for a time, until at last I had to own defeat. From afar off I had scented a horrible odour blowing at right-angles across the alley along which I was being carried. I covered my face and held my breath as I came into the zone. When I thought we were well past the danger, I took away my handkerchief and started to draw a long breath of the fresher air. Alas! the air was indeed pure when I began to draw this breath, but all of a sudden we came into range of the most fiendish stink that even China ever produced. I had now no breath to hold, and I had to fill my lungs with this devastating odour. Then I lay back in the chair, coughing and choking till I was black in the face.

Soon after we came out beside the Canton River. Here were thousands upon thousands of sampans—long canoes with superstructures of matting. Moored side by side and end to end in a huge conglomeration these sampans hold a population of many millions of river-dwellers. Each sampan carries its own dogs, chickens and other prospective foodstuffs; each has its own family of turbulent, brutish, impoverished Cantonese boatmen.

Good citizens in China live in the towns, leaving the waterways to the wicked. For here, as in the East generally, the rivers are the highways, and thus it is on the water that the "Highwaymen" are to be found.

If one was nervous of highwaymen and wanted to meet really virtuous Chinese citizens, their virtue indeed guaranteed by their governors, German China, which now exists no longer, was an interesting place to visit. It was so complete. The moment the German steamer came in sight of the harbour a band assembled on the quay, and began to blare away lustily as one sailed in. The orchestra of the liner also would be doing its utmost on the deck, and one's first impression of the shore would be entirely enveloped in brassy melody. And when one left, there would be the same excess of music, the orchestra on shore trying hard to overwhelm the musicians on board, all of which gave the German passengers a comfortable feeling of power and security.

As a matter of fact, Tsing-Tau under the Germans needed no such advertisement. It was a pleasant place, tidy and gay. There were good hotels, including one that overlooked a carefully arranged and regulated bathing-place; there were streets of decent shops and

everything had all the domestic qualities that might have been desired by the most provincial of Germans transplanted here to serve his country's ambitions. Even the coolies babbled a strange tongue, one-third German, one-third English and one-third Chinese, beside which pidgin-English was a simple and literary language. And lest there should be any misapprehension in the traveller's mind about the rest of China, he might buy picture postcards in the shops which displayed the most horrible representations of executions and beheadings and murders and such-like in the neighbouring Chinese provinces, not blessed by German protection.

Japan I knew better than China, though again not nearly as well as I knew India and was in later days to know Russia. Still, I remember the first time that I travelled in Japan. I determined that I would not content myself with the usual Europeans' route to two or three of the chief show places. Instead I engaged an interpreter and a couple of rickshaws and arranged for them to carry us through the centre of Japan, along the famous old road from Tokio to Osaka. Off we went one fine day from Nikko, our rickshaws bowling smartly along the famous avenue of cypresses that leads out of that holy town. Our journey

lasted several days. First we skirted Mount Fujiyama and the lake that lies near it. We slept that night, I remember, in a quiet Japanese inn in a village; but as we arrived late and left early I did not gather many impressions there, though I well recall a glorious persimmon tree whose red and yellow fruits hung down so close beside the balcony that in the early dawn I was able to pull aside one of the paper screens that formed the walls of my room and pluck some of the riper fruits.

On and on we went through the mountains, our poor coolies—I pitied them more than they did themselves, and felt ashamed to be using them as beasts of burden—pulling us along tandem-fashion. Along the level we would run, or rather they would run. Uphill I used to alight, though my interpreter had no scruples in the matter, and they would slowly drag the rickshaws to the summit of the pass. Downhill, the man between the shafts would steady the vehicle, while the other would fasten his rope behind it and slow it down, like the reindeer in the story-books. It was only the deep sand that sometimes covered the road that worried them; then we could not move but at a snail's pace, and when we emerged from such parts, the coolies would lie down panting in the roadside. One afternoon, we

approached a small town on the banks of a foaming river. As we came near it, I saw a number of men floating lumber downstream, standing on the logs and guiding them with long poles with iron hooks at the end; and I remember also the huge carcase of a snake lying across the road.

We soon came to the village, and the rickshawmen set up a shout outside an inn. This brought out the hostess and her maids who promptly fell on their knees and welcomed me with shrill conventional compliments. When I climbed out of the rickshaw and had taken off my shoes, the hostess led me across the high entrance hall, through the open kitchen, where a bowl of soup hung over a fire, through the central court, which was open to the air, and into the chief guest-room at the back of the inn. Cushions were brought in, and bright kimonos. I took off my dusty English clothes, and put on first the lower kimono, made of cotton, and then a gaudy silk one, bright with the colours of the hotel, which its guests display during their stay, both in and out of doors, as openly as an English cricketer his club blazer.

The room, like all Japanese rooms, was bare except for a single decoration. There is always a special corner for the room's ornament,

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JAPANESE PEASANTS

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A CHINESE SEDAN-CHAIR

which is sometimes a vase of flowers, sometimes a piece of china, sometimes simply a painting upon silk or a woodcut. The subjects are not seldom such as may make a European gasp, but they have no such effect on the Japanese, who seem more concerned with the arrangement than the subject of the ornaments. There are strict rules for decoration; it is laid down, for example, that flowers of different colours should not be mixed in one vase.

At length, because I was famishing, a low table and a brazier were brought in and set in front of me and my cushions, and tea was served, with a box of marsh-mallows. Everything was, of course, on a minute scale; six Japanese cups of tea are barely equal in quantity to one elsewhere. Moreover, the tea is not of the strength to which we are elsewhere accustomed. The teapot is filled with tepid water—not even hot. Into this a tiny muslin bag of tea is thrown, and at the same instant the tea is poured out. The tea in the bag has no time even to tinge the water before the teapot is empty.

But the marsh-mallows were very good.

When the hostess withdrew to prepare a meal I pushed aside one of the panels of oiled paper which compose the walls of Japanese houses, and looked out at the view. Just below the

window was the broad and foaming river, crossed by an arched, scarlet bridge gay with the coloured clothes and parasols of the passers-over, whose wooden clogs made a continuous rattle upon it. On the opposite bank lay another portion of the town ; thatched houses, temples and orchards mingled in a gradual ascent. In the background were the green shapes of the mountains.

This was what lay directly before me when I pushed aside the panel. What lay to either side I do not know, and for a very good reason. A framework of boards was built on either side of the opening, precisely in order to concentrate the guest's vision upon the view before him and to prevent him from turning his gaze in other and less beautiful directions. This method of " framing " a natural view is typically Japanese. Sometimes, if the best view from a guest-room lies either to the right or the left, the framework will be so arranged that one cannot look out straight ahead, but only in the most satisfactory direction.

Travellers have done the Japanese an injustice in exaggerating the beauty of their countryside. Japan is not really remarkable for its natural beauties ; there are many other countries far more beautiful in every respect. But what makes the real and peculiar beauty of Japan is the way in which man has improved

upon its meagre charms. I do not speak merely of the careful choice of lovely views and their "framing"; the process goes much further. Only in Japan does a village always make a hill-side seem more beautiful. The little houses with their exquisite proportions, colours and curiously thatched roofs, the temples and their courtyards of tall slender trees, the huge stone Shinto gates, straddling the roads so that the traveller, passing beneath them, may be reminded of the Sacred Gate they represent, the dress of the people—all these blend and improve the Japanese countryside.

Then the dinner commenced. The wall slid open and two maids entered bowing, one with some vessels, which she laid upon the table, the other, the daughter of the house, with a large tub of cooked rice. She kneeled down beside me and waited my pleasure, for the rice is the ritual part of Japanese meals; it is handed by the maid to the diner with a great show of ceremony, and he has to eat it with equal consideration. In one of the little pots there was white mushroom soup, in another some bean soup, and in another whelk soup, and there were, each in its own vessel, tiny quantities of omelette, vermicelli, boiled fish, lotus root, edible bamboo, pickled meat, pickled gherkin, mushroom, chestnut, edible seaweed, and a dozen other delicacies. But

the masterpiece was a lobster, and Heaven knows where it came from in this remote inland village; and there was an empty blue bowl for rice. First a cup of warm saké was poured out for me. It tasted like liquid celluloid. Then I took up my chopsticks, arranged them in my right hand and set to work, when the maid had filled up the blue bowl with rice, and moistened it with tea. I commenced with the soup, which was to be drunk from the vessels, and I made it the more tasty with occasional tit-bits from all the other bowls. The soups half finished, I came to the lobster, and, firmly planting one chopstick into it, I levered the other about to break off morsels. Then I lifted up my rice and shovelled great balls of it into my mouth, always, of course, dipping into the other vessels for flavourings. While the kneeling girl refilled the bowl I returned to the soups and the lobster. When I had finished, and the bowl had been refilled several times more, I motioned for the littered table to be removed. The girl fetched her maid and the two took it away, and the vat of rice, and brought me a towel and scented water with peach blossoms floating upon it. They filled a little Japanese pipe and held up a piece of charcoal on the tongs from which I could light it. It was so small that it had to be refilled after every three puffs. Then they

opened the cupboard and took out a mattress, laid it on the floor and fetched warm linen from the kitchen; for pillow I was given a wooden block; full of cunningly hinged drawers. There was a rustle at the door and my interpreter asked if he might enter. With him came the mistress of the inn, who wished most humbly to inquire, so he interpreted, if I would care for a bath.

When I expressed my delight, I was taken to the open courtyard. There, in the middle, beside the high passage-way, was a little square screened on three sides, but quite open on the fourth, and in it were sunk two tubs, one full of cold water and the other, with a huge stone kettle of coals at the bottom, of water heated to far more than blood heat. Soap and a basin were there, and joyfully remarking that the open side of the place did not lie wholly towards the kitchen, I stripped.

I heard footsteps on the passage, and the landlady's daughter entered! She bowed, I blushed, she bowed again and soaped me carefully all over and rinsed me down. It was her office, I was told, as daughter of the house, to bathe distinguished guests, and she was not in the least degree moved. And as for me, she lured me to drop into the tub of boiling water, wherein I stepped upon the kettle and had to immerse my head. I emerged half a minute

later, red as a lobster and, for the moment, washed clean of vice as ever any man newly baptised. She then dried me with a wet calico towel—a fantastic custom of the country, assisted me to don my kimonoes, and went to call Nakamura to take his turn in the bath. But she did not bathe him. When he was finished, the rest of the male company took its turn, finishing with our four rickshaw coolies, who considerably changed the already dimmed hue of the water. Then I believe the turn of the females came round, or would have come had they not been needed for the housework. But I was fast asleep.

When I woke in the morning, I clapped my hands thrice, and immediately the girl entered with the scented blossomy water and towels. I pushed aside the window-frame and gazed out across the noisy river. I rose and washed and cleaned my teeth on the balcony, to the wide-eyed amazement of two little urchins in the road beneath. Then breakfast was brought in, a miniature of the night's dinner. After it, we got into our rickshaws and the landlady presented me, as was proper, with an hotel towel for memory. Thereupon I paid her a small, a very small sum, for our meals and nothing at all for the rest, but instead, such is the etiquette, we gave her an amount several times as large for "tea-money," a gratuity,

for, in Japan, the hostesses are tipped far more than they are paid. Then we rolled away down the street, waving to the inn-folk as they bowed and chanted, "Sayonara, sayonara; pleasant journey; come again."

VI

IN THE UKRAINE

I WENT to Russia for the first time at the end of 1914, after medical discharge from the Army; my object was to learn Russian in order to qualify for an interpretership with English or Indian armies which might be operating in conjunction with Russian troops. I experienced at first the greatest difficulty in finding in Russia anyone who would talk Russian to me; everybody I met was willing to talk French or German or even English, but Russian appeared to be a dead language. This was at Petrograd; when I went to Warsaw I had many opportunities of learning Polish, but not Russian, while at Kiev I had excellent chances of learning Yiddish. Russian alone eluded me. But at last a way past this difficulty was found. I was advised by an English friend in Kiev to obtain a post as English tutor in a Russian family, where I should also have the opportunity to hear Russian spoken. I took his advice and within twenty-four hours I was duly installed in

the strangest family I have ever met in my life.

The mistress of the family was a fat middle-aged widow, half Russian, half Armenian. She was an unpleasant person, selfish, self-indulgent and brutal. I accompanied the family a week after my engagement to their country house, many miles distant from the town. There she tyrannised over her family, conducted a shameless intrigue with the Swiss tutor and treated her servants so severely and the peasants of the neighbouring village so tyrannically that everywhere I went, even if she herself was not with me, I met with nothing but scowls and evil looks. I should like to be able to relate that when the revolution broke out, the peasants took a well-merited revenge upon the old witch; but unfortunately, as always happens, just the opposite was the case. She married her Swiss paramour and, taking advantage of her new nationality, escaped with him and her wealth to Switzerland, while many thousands of better people fell victims to the violence of the exasperated Russian mob.

My especial charge was her younger son, a pale and pimply youth of thirteen or fourteen, who fully understood that his mother and her Swiss companion were robbing him and his elder brother of their inheritance and who

hated her with a strange introvertive hatred. He never spoke of the matter, but sat gazing at them with a mocking glance, like an impotent old man meditating revenge. His brother, a youth of twenty-three, was equally abnormal; he was intelligent in many ways, but in others he was not wholly sane, and he was terrified, I think, that his mother and the Swiss would have him put away in an asylum if he dared to protest either privately or, as he was entitled to do, through the local Marshal of the Nobility against his mother and the Swiss. He consoled himself with the seduction of peasant girls who were employed in the house and the clandestine perusal of pornographic French books, examples of which I often found in the cupboards in my room. The other members of the household were the boys' guardian, a charming old retired officer, a colleague of their dead father, who tried to maintain their interests in the estate against the Swiss and the mother without bringing matters to a public scandal, and passed his time chiefly in riding round the vast estate and its forests and, in the evenings, playing patience in his own little room; and an equally charming old lady who acted as housekeeper. She was said to be the illegitimate half-sister of our hostess, whose father had been as dissolute and dishonest an old scoundrel as my employer was

becoming. The two old people were very fond of each other; each was sorry to see the other caught in this madhouse atmosphere, which was terrifying to their simple souls. Had they not been Russians, I fancy they would long since have cut adrift from this family, married and set up a home of their own. But as things were, they let life drift past them, saying little even to each other of their unhappiness and nothing at all to anybody else. They were, I think, genuinely sorry to see me too caught in this foul stream. My employer, to whom I had frankly stated my position, telling her that my reason for wishing to teach her son English was to learn Russian in my spare hours, had not only not believed a word I said, but had definitely ordered her household not to speak Russian in my hearing, lest I should learn it and leave. She thought, or at least she confided to her friends, that I was a spy of the Central Powers, whose British passport and general explanations were all false.

I wonder if, had I searched through the length and breadth of Russia, I could have stumbled into a more sinister environment. The very dogs of the house were mad. There were two huge St. Bernards who attacked strangers, and were actually dangerous. I remember how, shortly after my arrival, one of them had softening of the brain and prowled

round the house, day and night, hurling himself upon anyone who came his way. One day he caught me, and bit me in the arm through all my coats and clothes, and it took four people to haul him off. But this made no difference to our hostess, who only laughed and said he was often like that.

Despite the nightmare atmosphere of the house, I spent a fairly happy time in it. The country was wonderful, deep in the heart of Russia, with glorious expanses of meadowland, forests and plain. Providence was kind; my pupil caught measles almost as soon as I arrived and I had little work with him. The rest of the family, in defiance of the hostess, went out of their way to help me learn Russian. After two or three months, I already knew enough Russian—it is not a difficult language to pick up if one hears it spoken—to be able to get about, and, having at the outset warned my employer that I should leave as soon as this was the case, I prepared to depart. She flew into a rage, as I had expected, but she did not dare to try to take my passport and thus prevent my moving about—a procedure she invariably adopted with her Russian dependents and servants—and with farewells to the rest, I drove away one morning a dozen miles through the forest to a railway station and set out once more for Kiev and civilisation. It

had not been an altogether pleasant experience, but I would not have missed it for worlds. I had now an excellent idea of the bad Russian landowner—not the average type, to be sure—who was more than anyone else responsible for the nature and the horrors of the Russian revolution.

Returning to Kiev, I now came into contact with the Ukrainian nationalist movement, which had there one of its headquarters. Some of my friends were keen Ukrainophiles, and together we used to attend the Ukrainian theatre and Ukrainian literary gatherings and generally endeavour to persuade ourselves—I was unsuccessful in this—that the movement was due to genuine nationalist feeling and was not an anachronism fostered for political reasons by the Austrian enemy. My most pleasing memory of this period was a visit I paid to the grave of Shevchenko, the Ukrainian poet. I went with the English friend who had advised me to go as tutor to the Russian family, and whom I was fated to meet again afterwards in the midst of the rout of the White Armies in South Russia in 1920.

We hurried down, my friend and I, to the Jewish quarters of Kiev. The Dnieper stretched out for miles in flood. Villages that in summer stood high above the banks lay like

islands among its waters. Some of the very streets of Kiev were only passable in boats. We were rowed along to the landing-stage, took our tickets and hurried upon the steamer. On the first-class deck a round-faced old General was eating a late lunch; two army doctors were strolling about in the sun; and we sat at a table and drank coffee. The steamer started off speedily downstream. We were turned down below decks, General and all, beneath Kiev's two bridges, lest we should throw bombs and blow them up. A patrol of soldiers came on deck with the usual fixed bayonets, and searched suspicious or timid people's luggage for explosives. At last we were released from the stuffy cabins; the soldiers rowed away and the General left the two doctors and came to speak to us.

"Good afternoon, gentlemen," he commenced, "what nationality are you? Ah, English! I am proud to know you. Perhaps you know me; here is my card. You do not? Ah, gentlemen, though, as you see, I am a military man, I am also a poet and a philosopher. I believe in the indestructibility of matter. Water, water is everywhere. In me there is water! In you there is water! In all of us there is water, and everywhere there is water. And so, in ten years, I believe that a great part of me will be part of you, and a great part

of you part of me. This, gentlemen, is my philosophy. In my poems you will find the complete expression of my thoughts; afterwards, when the time is favourable for poetry, I will read them to you. And, gentlemen, I believe in the divinity of Jesus Christ." He crossed himself three times. "I am delighted to have met you gentlemen this afternoon. Do you know why? You represent the intelligence, the intellect of England, and I, a humble poet, represent the soul of Russia. By descent I am a Little Russian; I am proud of it, but I am not one of those who seek differences with our great Motherland. Gentlemen, in me you see the soul of Russia, gentle, simple, Christian. That is why I am glad to have met you to-day. England and Russia are the only two Christian nations in the world! The French—pah! they are sitting in their trenches and doing nothing. The Germans are in league with the Turk, the Mohammedan; but we, England and Russia, your rich, cultured England and my poor, ignorant, unhappy Russia, we are the Christian nations of the world, upholding our faith against the infidel. And what is the essence of Christianity? Love! Love! And what is love? It is mutual affection. If I am in love with some one, if you are in love, do you grudge your beloved anything? If her share is greater, are

you sorry? If your share is less, do you regret? No, you are glad, and that is love. So it is with love between nations. Nations that love one another do not grudge each other anything. If England really loves Russia with a Christian love, she will not grudge her Constantinople!"

Here he concluded his monologue, smiled graciously, took a tender farewell of us and went below. Gasping, we exchanged cigarettes with the doctors and entered into conversation. I strolled up and down with a shrewd-faced little man, who asked me with a smile how I liked the General. In his turn he praised the beauties of Little Russia, of the mighty Dnieper in flood, of Shevchenko.

"We are on our way to his tomb," said I, and the little man's face lit up.

"Do not think," said he, "that I dream of separation from Russia or the re-establishment of a hetmanship or any such absurdity, but I admit to you that, as a Little Russian, I can never feel really at home in Great Russia. This is my country, this is my river, this is my people; we are faithful servants of Russia, but we are not Russians."

His Polish colleague and my friend joined us, and with a last glance at the sunset upon the broad river we went below to dine. The General was at the head of the table with a light

supper before him. In one hand was a book. He was reading his poems to a wounded soldier who, for numerous acts of bravery, had been raised to officer's rank. The poor man, tortured by twinges in his leg, was staring blankly at the fat old man. Is this, his eyes seemed to say, is this what I was raised from the ranks for ?

"A little poetry at supper, gentlemen," said the General, "a little nourishment for the soul." He finished his supper, said long good nights to us all, called the bewildered soldier-officer "cher collègue" and went off to his cabin to sleep. The rest of us dined, discussing Kiev, the Dnieper, Chehov and Shevchenko over our tea. At last the Pole unburdened himself. The General, he said, was a great Liberal, too great a Liberal. Russia was not nearly as ignorant, as unhappy as he thought or pretended to think. The Little Russian agreed, and they decided that the Great Russian was "good-souled." At this point the steamer crashed into a landing-stage in the usual devastating manner. The waiter rushed in, gave me the bill, asked for our luggage, was surprised to find we had none and saw us off the boat. It was midnight, moonlit and warm. A crowd of peasants and Jews was scrambling into some small boats to be rowed a couple of miles upstream to the town, Konyev.

But we knocked at the door of a hut and asked a little boy there to guide us to the tomb. The road was under the floods, he said; would we go by boat? He called out his sister and they paddled us half a mile down the river to a solitary hut at the foot of a great cliff. The boy led us to a wooden stairway. Up it we clambered cautiously, up and up the cliff, zigzagging through a birch wood. Through the trees we saw the swift, shining waters. It was as solemn as the approach to some Indian temple. We emerged from the birches along a pathway which led us through an orchard to the summit of a cliff. There before us was the mound of the poet's tomb with its white stone cross gleaming in the moonlight.

We climbed the mound and gazed about us. Behind were rolling cliffs and chasms, dark forests and rare white-walled huts lit by the moon, while before us, far below, encircling villages and their churches and gardens, flowed the Dnieper, "the blusterer roaring."

The moon set, and the little boy guided us down the cliff to the hut. "Father," said I to the old peasant, "may we sleep here?" He brought out straw mattresses and set them on benches, and we slept inside his hut. When the sun rose and turned the broad waters blood-red, I woke, stepping on a three-days-old calf beside the bench; and the old man paddled us

upstream to the distant town. We rowed into the calm of a flooded street, greeted by the inhabitants living moistly and dangerously in upper stories, and landed in the market-place. Jews, Jews and Jews ! It was Saturday and Jewry triumphed. We asked when the steamer left for Kiev. The few Russians we met were amiable but weak in their replies. Perhaps at half-past nine, they would answer, or, yes, it might be four o'clock. The Jews were much prompter. Eleven o'clock, said some emphatically; three, said others with as much positiveness. We looked for breakfast. Passing two miserable inns in disgust, we climbed a hill to the municipal buildings, grouped round the prison. There was Podolski's hotel, much recommended. Two Jews were lounging at the door of the shanty. We asked them if we could get breakfast there, but they were so offended at our presumption in asking them, they being bagmen and not hotel proprietors, that they merely stared and told us to ask inside. Two sluts were washing the corridor. They did not know if we could have breakfast but referred us to the son of the house. This individual, a greasy-locked, one-eyed young Jew boy, said that if we came back in an hour they might be able to do something for us. Finally we discovered the local Russian Club, where we were washed and fed, and by

Gentiles. Down again we strolled to the market place, and again asked when the steamer would leave. In half an hour, cried a wily old Jew; be quick! You can have my boat for a rouble! In great perturbation we struck a bargain for eighty kopecks, and a boatload of young Hebrews paddled us down to the landing-stage. Arrived there, we learned that the boat had passed through two hours before. We cursed the old Jew, whose representatives were scurrying away with our money, and knocked up the little boy in the hut. He and his father sailed us down to the tomb: my friend went with them sailing over the waters, but I climbed up to the mound and slept there in the sun till the afternoon.

In the sun it was hot and alive with flies when I woke up, but Shevchenko's cottage was cool and clean. I inspected the door, but it was securely locked; the windows were bolted. At last with a penknife I forced a window, climbed in and rested upon the benches inside. The room was hung with wreaths and offerings of carpets and poems, and in the place of honour was Shevchenko's portrait of himself. It was his skill in painting that changed Shevchenko from a serf to a freeman—he really was free ten years of his life. His master observed his ability and sent him to be taught at the

Petersburg Academy. When the pupil became the favourite of the professors, he offered him to them for sale at a high price. They bought him freedom and, living in their society, he painted and commenced to write his poems. After that came persecution, prison and the eleven years in the disciplinary regiment, from which he was to be released with the hideous certificate: "This man is now harmless."

Soon it occurred to me that I was in an awkward position. I concealed the evidences of my crime, crawled out of the window and lay down again beneath the mound of the tomb. My friend came to fetch me, and together we rowed to the hut. The old man received us as honoured guests and led us in. It was a single living-room, big, low and clean. The platforms of the stove half filled it, with their mysterious cupboards and recesses for the children at night; a table, three or four benches, a dog, a cat and the calf, some holy pictures and a dresser were all the other furniture. Here lived the man, his wife and their six children, and yet the room was clean as a Brahmin's. Our host explained that he was no mere peasant; he was of a higher rank, a freeman, whose ancestors had never been serfs. He fried us some eggs, but, as there was no butter, he fried them in sour cream.

We ate with repugnance, every mouthful anxiously watched by the hospitable man. Not to hurt his feelings we ate the whole dish, and I hoped I might never eat a fried egg again ! Another steamer was expected at ten o'clock, and we strolled about the cliffs in the evening. The girls of the village collected upon a path and sang their exquisite Ukrainian melodies. Two or three times we came across solitary youths practising upon the balalaika. They were little advanced in the art, and we were grateful for their modesty. Then we returned to the hut.

Confusion ! There stood the local sub-inspector of police, supported by two ragamuffin constables. The inquisition commenced. The inspector, a slim-faced individual, looked at us disdainfully and snapped, " Who are you ? " We looked at the inspector disdainfully and told him. " What nationality ? " " English." " Oh ! foreigners ! What are you here for ? " " Pleasure." " Where are your passports ? " Our papers produced, he pointed out that they were not English but " Great British " passports ; this explained, he said he would take them to his office and visa them. But first he indulged his pride of position and his inquisitiveness. " What were you doing at that town ? " he asked my friend, pointing

to an old visa. "Staying with friends." "Which friends?" "If you must know, with Count ——." "What is his wife's name?" "Nina," replied my complacent friend. "Does she live with him?" "No." "That's quite right. I see you are telling the truth." My turn came. "Who pays your expenses?" "I do." "How?" "Never mind!" I replied, greatly daring, and the onlookers gasped. "Have you got any money with you now?" "Yes" (his face lit up) "when it is necessary!" and his face grew sullen again; he marched away with his ragamuffins, taking our passports and promising to send them down to us at once.

Then we discovered that his office was two miles upstream, in the town. The boat was due in three hours. With such a man to deal with, there was nothing for it but to follow him up ourselves. So we tracked him up the river to the town and the police station, stood upon our dignity there, scored a dozen irritating little points off him in the presence of his superior, absolutely refused them both a farthing when they asked us if we did not wish to contribute (through them!) to the Red Cross Fund, and, leaving them aghast at this breach of corrupt custom, marched out of the office and were paddled downstream to the landing-stage.

No signs of the boat and the waiting-room locked! We had it opened and lay down to sleep. A few score shabby Jews, of all ages and sizes, who had been contented until our arrival, then laid siege to the room and swarmed inside. There never was such a scene of activity as these scrambling for places. The weak went to the wall, the ancient were pushed and fell, the beefy and bony lay down on the seats, and the rest sat on the table and the floor. The little room became as crowded as the Black Hole, but rather than be comfortable in the public waiting-room, with yards and yards of space, each preferred to rub thighs with a crowd in the first-class room. How the beefy and bony expostulated—those who had secured seats! They told the others they were Jews (which was a great insult), and were acting Jewishly (which was a yet greater one). The noise and smell became unbearable. My friend announced that he was going for the policeman and the rest of us benchers guaranteed to keep his place for him. The policeman came and with the magic word "Out!" expelled a dozen or so of those who could not possibly be imagined as first-class passengers. There was a guileful old man, the patriarchal respectability of whose long white beard was belied by his little glittering eyes. He de-

nounced one of the beefy and bony as a "scandalist" and had him thrown out, securing the bench for himself. The audience chuckled. We were reduced to a dozen, and remained moderately peaceable for an hour or so. Then we all woke together and one Hebrew gentleman got up to make himself tea, sitting on my legs to be nearer the table. A co-religionist who was very uncomfortable on the floor in a draughty corner, asked him if he might sit on his bench until he had finished tea. "Certainly not," said the first gentleman, and settled himself a little more heavily upon me. I remonstrated, and everyone aided me to revile my persecutor. He neither cared nor moved. Then a coin dropped out of my friend's pocket. He rose to pick it up, and the uncomfortable Jew stole his place. Everyone cried shame upon him, especially the gentleman on my legs. But my friend lost his temper. He said they were all alike, all dirty Jews!

Oh, the commotion! All this dozen that before had irritated and insulted and chided and cursed one another turned upon us. Their previous squabbles were forgotten and we were threatened and abused. Life was made intolerable for us. A dozen fluent tongues were at work without cease. We said it was certain that none of them had any right to

be there; they were clearly all third-class passengers. The expostulations grew even louder; we slunk out of the room and passed into a tiny, cold, uncomfortable baggage-room amid the laughter of the faithful. Meanwhile our enemies held a council of war. The rich Jews subsidised the poor Jews and they marched off in a body to take first-class tickets. But the boat did not arrive. The Dnieper, the blusterer, had risen so high that steamers could not pass beneath its bridges. And so we waited all that night and all the next day to midnight, in momentary expectation of our boat, cold, hungry, dirty, quarrelsome and miserable.

The Dnieper dropped a little and the steamer came at last, and we and our undesirable companions spread ourselves out to sleep beside the other occupants of the first-class cabin. I stood on deck a few hours later, chatting with a fat little mine-owner. He nudged me in the ribs, and pointed to a shabby coquettish young woman sitting on a bench. "She was travelling third class," he said, "until the General saw her and paid her passage here." "What General?" I asked. "Oh, he's still sleeping, the poor old thing." At that moment he came up the companion, old, fat, puffy and weary, his moustaches drooping and one eye almost closed. I looked more closely at him,

started, looked again and cried out with surprise. It was our own, our very own poetical General! "Good morning," said I, when he was well seated beside the damsel. "Aha! dear friend, good day!" he cried, and then, leaning forward, he whispered very seriously in my ear, "Dear friend! do not think evil of this young lady. She is the pattern of virtue. She has told me her sad, sad story, and we wept together all last night!"

We dined, the General and his lady, my friend and I. She told us her sad story, and the general read us his poems. I recollect that the first line of the apostle of the immortality of matter was this:

> Alas, that all things perish and leave not a trace behind. . . .

Kiev! Kiev! Kiev! We were all bundled below decks and searched for bombs. The Jews had taken first-class tickets only for the night and were now retired to more suitable accommodation. The General asked me if he could not make his living as a journalist in England! In the public cabin the occupants had somehow procured surreptitious alcohol (as was not difficult despite the official Prohibition) and, unnaturally merry, were singing, "La, la, la," mine-owners, Poles, landlords, engineers and merchants.

Kiev ! It was really Kiev and we were home. We drove off home and washed for the first time in three days ; I carried round a sprig of cherry blossom from the tomb to a devoted admirer of Shevchenko, and my homage to the poet's ghost was done.

VII

THE CAUCASUS

THE "STRAY DOG" AND RASPUTIN

FROM Kiev I went south and then east to the Caucasus, the most romantic part of the Russian Empire. It was a curious experience to leave the broad, monotonous plains and pine forests of European Russia and to plunge into the wild, Oriental, subtropical regions of Georgia. At Baku, with its deserts and bubbling oil-fields, I halted hardly a day; at Tiflis, a wild town I was to know so well a few years later after the Russian Empire broke up and the Georgian Republic came into existence, I stayed a little longer; but soon I was on the shores of the Black Sea in the Batum Province, where I was to stay with Russian friends, who were now returning there after having had to escape northward at the outbreak of the War from the menace of a Turkish invasion.

Many Russians had spoken to me of the Batum country, but not even their description had prepared me for the beauty of the Province.

Above the tideless sea towered the sunny Colchian hills and valleys graced with romantic forests and streams. Away in the north were snowy Elbruz and the Caucasian peaks, and in the south, far across the Turkish lines, the white peaks above Trebizond. A railway ran along the shore, with tunnels through rocky headlands, and bridges over stony hill streams. Our party alighted at a station about twelve miles to the north of Batum, built upon the very rocks of the seashore. It consisted of a platform and a shop, the latter being the private enterprise of the local factotum. We climbed a narrow path through the garden of a pretty villa and came by a road hedged with roses to our destination.

This was a long bungalow, surrounded by broad verandas, set on the ridge of the hill and looking down on the sea far below and, to the left, upon Batum itself, minute on its peninsula. East and west the windows gave for miles over the fertile Province. All round the bungalow and stretching down the hill-side was my hosts' main care—the plantation. Here were the hundreds of tender lemon and mandarin trees, brought direct from Japan, and planted four years previously; a multitude of fruit trees and flowering plants; acres of tea plants interspersed among the mandarins; a grove of bamboo and another of eucalyptus; a little

garden of medicinal plants and innumerable other botanical treasures. The subtropical climate of Batum encourages almost every known plant and tree to put forth its fruits. Tuberoses grow in the open without any protection, side by side with violets and sweet-peas. Strawberries, wild and cultivated, grow in abundance; as for roses, the very paths are carpeted with their petals. The pine and the palm shade the same roads; no wonder that the Golden Fleece was sought in this fertile land of Colchis.

Alas for fertility! Even in the one winter of neglect during the Turkish danger at the beginning of the War the gardens had become overgrown with ferns and weeds. The Georgian gardeners who had been left in charge had done nothing more than force the outhouses and steal the stored maize crop of the previous year to sell to the bakers. The whole plantation was forlorn; it was months before its slopes were cleared.

And then we began to think of improvements. We made a fine rose garden in front of the bungalow, spending the rest of the summer in "budding" mandarins, peaches, persimmons, apples and pears, superintending the building of stables and the repairing of the outhouses, and in the thousand other delightful tasks of a subtropical plantation. Soon came the

greatest event of all. I had written to a kind friend in India for seeds of the champak, and towards the autumn they arrived from Poona. By now, no doubt, the young shoots are growing up; in a few years the Caucasus may be rendered still more beautiful by the fragrant, white, wax-like flowers of this most lovely of all Eastern trees.

On the veranda of our bungalow one day I was startled by a reference in the paper I was reading to the "Caucasian race." "The Caucasian race?" I thought. "Which Caucasian race?" Then I remembered what in any other part of the world I should never have forgotten—that the "Caucasian race" is the conventional term to describe the white peoples of the world. In the Caucasus itself no one would ever contemplate the possibility of the existence of a unique "Caucasian" race. Our Batum Province contained representatives of more races and peoples than a stranger would ever have supposed. When I realised the meaning of the paragraph in the paper I reflected upon the various folk I had had dealings with during the morning.

The day had started with rousing our two Georgian gardeners from their sleep in the kitchen. The Georgians are the principal inhabitants of the Batum Province. The Christian Georgians are, in the main, tall,

handsome, indolent men, amazingly like the people of Kashmir in looks and character. The Mohammedan Georgians are much the same, but seem considerably intermingled with the smaller and swarthier Moslems from further south. We awoke our gardeners, and urged them into the garden, where they were joined by the day-labourers, also Georgians. The moment they were left alone they dropped their tools and stretched themselves in the shade of a walnut tree, smoking tobacco that, war or no war, was daily smuggled into the Province from the Turkish border, and gazing across the bay at the distant hills, whence boomed continually the Russian and Turkish artillery. So I discovered them on my return from the stables. I scolded them vigorously in Russian—a language of which, however, they understood barely a word—and grinning genially, they went back to their work.

When I reached the house again, I found there a courteous old Persian greengrocer from Batum who used daily to come out by the first train and buy roses and other flowers and fruit from us.

When the Persian greengrocer had gone, the caretaker of a neighbouring plantation came up, carrying a mutilated duck, which he declared had been massacred by one of our dogs. Rudolph never lost an opportunity of paying

off old scores against our dogs ; I compromised for a quarter of a rouble, sixpence, a scandalous price for a mere duck in a land where beef cost only a penny a pound. Rudolph and his industrious wife, Katerina, were Germans ; that is to say, they came from one of the German colonies in the interior of Russia ; they had never in their lives been in Germany, but they spoke very little Russian.

Rudolph disposed of, there arrived a troop of ragged Greeks from a Greek village away in the hill-tops. They told us they were engaged by a newly arrived Russian planter to clear his plantation for cultivation, and had lost their way.

Not long afterwards, as we sat at breakfast on the veranda, the Russian orderly of a neighbouring general galloped by and shouted to us that the Kurds were coming. We hastily mobilised our forces, and posted them at intervals where our plantation was bordered by the road. These particular Kurds spent the winter somewhere to the north of us ; every spring they trekked out in a body with their carts and cattle to the pasture lands in the hills at the back of Batum. Their path was an uninterrupted progress of petty larcenies ; hence our precautions. Soon they came, a wild and gaily coloured mob of gipsies. At the head was a party of brightly dressed

women, riding double on little hill ponies. Then came a long line of carts and the thin, wretched cattle. By this time, the gardeners and ourselves were having a strenuous time, spying nimble forms in our hay-lofts and among the young trees, and chasing them out with shouts and blows. Cries from the stables made me run up there, to find a sturdy Kurd attempting to drag out our bullocks to a herd of his own that he had driven up near by ; if he had succeeded in mixing them together, we should hardly have been able to trace our animals amongst his.

The barbarous mob passed by at last. It was then that a good-natured Armenian youth, the son of the station-master, called in on his way to the Turkish village higher up in the hills and left the paper in which was the reference to the " Caucasian race."

No wonder I did not understand the meaning of the phrase at first !

The Batum Province is, of course, really a part of Asia Minor, but under Russian rule it has come gradually to acquire a veneer of Europeanism. It is, therefore, only natural that the province should have a certain synthetic charm all of its own, half-Asiatic, half-European—half-barbaric, half-civilised. Our plantation, as I said, lay along the top of a hill overlooking the sea ; before us beside the

seashore ran the railway, which with its single line of rails connected us with Europe and brought us thence our newspapers and letters and parcels. But behind us was Asia. There the hill-sides and forests were almost untouched, except for a few scattered clearings and an occasional village.

It would be an exaggeration to say that there was certain danger in walking or riding inland; yet this was never wholly absent. No woman dared ride there alone, and it was prudent for men to carry firearms. There might be a party of truculent Kurds in the neighbourhood; or a band of thieves might perhaps have escaped into the province from across the Turkish border. A local Turkish village might suddenly take it into its head to attack either Russian travellers or a neighbouring Christian village, in hope of earning the admiration of the Turkish armies which it imagined to be advancing in our direction. One never knew what danger was about, or where it might lurk.

A few months before I first went to the Batum Province a rich Armenian merchant came to spend a holiday near by. He rented an old Georgian castle on the seashore and used to sit all day luxuriously overlooking the waves that lapped the rocks on three sides of his residence. One afternoon, his son, a boy about fifteen or sixteen years old, went out to pay a

call upon a neighbour of ours. He took the high road, shady with its blossoming hedges of roses and honeysuckle. But at a dark place in the road, where it had been cut into a steep portion of the hill-side, half a dozen men jumped out of the bushes and seized him. They were wild-looking fellows from the mountains, speaking a language the boy could not understand.

They gagged and bound their victim, and hid him till nightfall in a shed in a deserted plantation. They then picked him up and hurried him off inland through the forests. The next day they sliced off a piece of his ear, as evidence that he was in their power, and sent it to the millionaire father with a demand for a ransom. They warned him also that, if he communicated with the authorities, his son would be killed.

The father decided to play a double game. He did not take the threats seriously, nor even did he believe that the bandits had really cut the piece from his son's ear ; it had been taken, he thought, from a handy corpse. He temporised about the ransom, and quickly travelled into Batum to lay a complaint before the Commandant there. The latter ordered out a troop of Cossacks to scour the countryside for the boy. A day or two later the father received a further instalment of ear with reiterated

demands for the ransom. Meanwhile the Cossacks discovered the hiding-place of the bandits and sent for the father to be present at his son's release. He came; the Cossacks stormed the building where, the night before, their quarry had been seen. They found no living soul inside. Only the boy lay there with his throat cut; a paper fastened to his clothes announced that this was the requital of his father's double-dealing.

A few months after, I came into touch with the Georgian caretaker of a neighbouring plantation. He was a careless, happy-go-lucky fellow, with red moustaches and morals to match. You never saw his tall figure at work among the mandarin bushes until late in the day; and even then he much preferred to borrow one of our horses and canter down bare-back to the tavern three miles away, where he could drink and gossip with his friends. Late in the evening the pony would gallop back bravely up the hill, with this elegant troubadour swaying on its back and trolling Georgian folk-songs with his high-pitched voice.

His wife was a dark-haired, black-eyed woman, handsome for a Georgian peasant—industrious too and a good housewife. She used to spend her time with her children, working or sleeping in the shade of her hut. Her patience and good-nature won her the

respect of all the people in the neighbourhood, Georgians and Russians alike.

One day Samson—that was his name—fell ill with a cough which grew worse every hour. His wife dosed him tenderly with a cough-cure, but despite this he was very ill indeed towards evening. A Russian lady, who had a local reputation as an amateur physician, was sent for; but before she had reached his hut, Samson was dead. The lady happened casually to pick up the almost empty bottle of cough-cure which the disconsolate widow had thrown away; she thought it might prove useful for other patients. Among the latter—they were a varied company—was one of our dogs. The amateur doctor gave it some of the cough-cure on a lump of sugar; in a few minutes the dog began to howl and then fell dead.

Gentle Mrs. Samson had come to the end of her patience and had poisoned her ne'er-do-well of a husband. But only she and we know it to this day. After his death, she went back quietly to her village with the children.

It would be well to speak now of the amenities of the Batum Province—of those, at least, which it owed to its Russian veneer. And here I do not mean to speak of those conditions of authority which had transformed the province from an ill-governed Turkish outpost into a thriving and progressive Russian de-

pendency; I should prefer to speak of the amenities as they affected the private life of the inhabitants.

Foremost among them, of course, was our beloved railway from Batum to Tiflis. In a land where roads were few and bad, where rivers were frequent but bridges rare and fords difficult to cross even on horseback, where potential enemies far outnumbered known friends—in all this semi-barbarism, the single-line railway with its two trains a day was our one link with the central authority, with civilisation and with Europe. Since the commencement of the War, steamboat communication with Odessa and, of course, with Constantinople had ceased, and the Province felt itself more than ever dependent on its railway.

But we owed to the railway, besides right and lawful advantages, certain illicit benefits also. For example, it was sometimes my pleasurable task clandestinely to descend the hill-side at two o'clock in the night with a single attendant to meet the train which passed then towards Batum. Our purpose was to receive contraband.

My usual companion on these journeys was a gardener, Hussein. He was a tall young Mohammedan Georgian, very handsome with his fine and large features. As he was one of the strongest men in the Province, he would do

any work in our plantation which his companions found beyond their power. Even our black bullock—a notorious scoundrel—found Hussein too strong for it; when he appeared, it would cease its tugging and plunging, and meekly submit to the yoke. Hussein's only fault—except, of course, his Caucasian laziness—was a childish sensitiveness. If his methods of gardening were called in question either by his companions or by us, Hussein's mouth would drop and his eyes spill over, and the whole seven foot of him would weep and wail like a baby.

I chose him to accompany me on my midnight excursions to the railway because, as well as being the strongest of all our gardeners, he was the most surefooted. This was necessary on our steep and slippery paths, especially at night. The rainfall in the Batum Province is heavy, and often whole portions of the hillside would be washed down, blocking the roads. When the train arrived, we would be hiding just outside the station at the place where the engine came to a stop. The train remained at our little wayside platform only for a few seconds, but in this time a heavy package of mysterious shape would be hoisted from the cab of the engine upon Hussein's muscular shoulders. The bundle looked like a bloated little animal, with its head and legs cut off.

And such, indeed it was. It was a wine-skin, full of the best Caucasian wine.

Wine had been contraband in the Caucasus ever since the publication at the outbreak of the War of the ukase prohibiting the public sale of strong drink throughout the whole Russian Empire. It was not to be expected that a wine-producing and wine-drinking country like the Caucasus would acquiesce in this prohibition, but outwardly at least we did so. The vines in our own plantation were too young to give good wine ; so we sent elsewhere for it.

The next morning the distended little skin would be untied at the neck and a score or more of bottles filled with its contents. Sometimes, if the wine-skin was foul, it soured the wine, but this accident was fortunately rare.

Another amenity which the Province owed to Russia was the gendarmes. But these, unlike the railway, were not an unmixed blessing. Russian gendarmes were never very intelligent men, but it seemed that the stupidest among the whole Imperial force were sent to the alien beat of the Caucasus. There was a very foolish gendarme at a neighbouring railway station. I had to drive down to this station one day to meet a train. I was dressed, as usual, in flowing home-made pantaloons, a tennis shirt and a tall conical gardener's hat with a huge straw brim. As the road was full

of boulders washed down from the hills in a recent storm, driving was difficult and I carefully turned up the sleeves of my shirt to the elbow in order to leave my hands quite free.

When I reached the station I got down and walked on the platform. A few gardeners and villagers were standing there in various stages of ragged undress. Suddenly I heard a voice behind me calling, "Mossoo! Mossoo!" I turned to find that the gendarme of the station was addressing me with this presumably French title. I inquired what was the matter. Pointing to my rolled-up sleeves, he announced that he was about to arrest me for being improperly dressed! To this day I do not know what put the fantastic idea into his head. It was suspected locally that he had been reading reports of police court cases in Petrograd and Moscow, and had conceived the notion that it was his duty to discover identical crimes in Transcaucasia! Fortunately, while he was repeating the charge and I was protesting, the train arrived from Batum, and a friendly Russian general rescued me from the gendarme. The next day I went into Batum to the chief of the gendarmes to protest against the affront done me. Alas! the gendarme at the station had screwed up his courage and had already sent in a report to the effect that he had arrested me oe suspicion that I was a spy!

The chief of gendarmes assured me that he had already punished his subordinate—not for arresting me, however, but for not having immediately taken steps to raid the bungalow where I lived in search of incriminating documents.

Our neighbours on the plantation were not unamusing people. One was an old revolutionary who in 1905 had hoisted the Red Flag over the Government factory in Turkestan of which he was the manager, and had been exiled to Batum—no dreadful fate—for his pains. Another was a middle-aged lady who had grown tired of her husband and now lived on her land with a youngish but ugly retired major. I had been taught that Russia was extremely lenient towards social heretics—so everyone said, but I noticed that our neighbour was more or less boycotted. In other directions we were surrounded by seven generals! Generals were appallingly plentiful in Russia, especially retired generals, like most of these. Not long ago a lady lived in Moscow with ten sons, all generals. Our seven generals were miscellaneous. There was one who spoke twelve Asiatic languages, but dared not speak at all when his wife looked at him. Another was a septuagenarian rake who scandalised us with his companions. A third had been governor of a small town and retired with a large fortune.

He confined himself now to minor villainies. Once, I was told, he contracted to build a villa for two ladies who were coming from Siberia. He proposed to them that it should be "in the Russian style." Poor old ladies! He squeezed them dry, and built them a Russian peasant hut! The rogue was now mixed up with the Red Cross. He received a big salary, double travelling expenses, and pickings, and also his pension.

Another neighbour was a professor. Half a Georgian, in intimate moments he renounced his Russian half and expanded with national pride. He told me tales of the Empress Tamara, the Elizabeth of the Georgians. If patriotic legend may be believed, she reigned at the beginning of the thirteenth century and kept Georgia independent of the Persians and Byzantines. Her death was as curious as her life; the stories say indeed that she is not dead to this day but sleeps in a golden cave lighted by two unquenchable lamps.

Once, a story tells, a Georgian shepherd was sleeping with his head upon the stone at the door of this cave. When he woke in the morning, he was mad. He ran into the forests and lived with wild brutes. His fellows begged him to show them the place where he had slept that they might avoid it. He neither answered them nor knew where to find the spot. At last

providence led him to the cave and he prayed to Tamara to forgive him. She heard his prayer and he lost his madness, but never again could he or any other man find the tomb.

One day Queen Tamara was sunning her pet falcon on the terrace of her palace, when it slipped away from her hand and flew to a marble fountain in the middle of the lake. Tamara promised to grant the wish of whoever should catch it and place it in her hands again. A young soldier plunged into the water and commenced to swim towards the distant bird. The Empress, catching his glance, suddenly grew afraid and silently prayed that, if in his heart he held evil intent towards her, he might not return successful and alive. But the soldier swam on in the sunlight, captured the bird and plunged into the water again. Soon he drew near the Empress, but, just as he was leaving the water, the falcon bit him and flew of its own will into the Empress's hand. So the youth did not get his reward.

Once upon a time, Tamara happened to journey into the mountains. She left the keys of her palace with her old nurse, forbidding her to open a twelfth apartment. The curious nurse opened that door and the Snow-star, which Tamara had imprisoned there, escaped. After this, snow, which had never fallen before in these parts, began to lie every year upon

Mount Elbruz and once a decade upon the very seashore. When Tamara returned, she discovered the crime and dismissed the nurse, who fled to the mountains and became a witch. When after a long and glorious reign Tamara died, the witch snatched her out of her death-bed, carried her off and laid her in the earth on Elbruz, hiding the place.

Of my impressions of Moscow and Petrograd when at last in the autumn I returned to European Russia, I need not say much here, the more especially as they are dulled for me by the memories of my more recent visit to Moscow when it had been for four years under the rule of the Bolshevists. When I first knew it in 1915 it was a splendid and animated town ; when I returned six years later, it was, as a friend of mine said, like a city in a war zone occupied by hostile troops ; but I shall come to this in good time. I am concerned for the moment to recall two of the more vivid moments of my early visit, both of them in Petrograd.

The first was my introduction to the " Stray Dog," a famous literary cabaret. I came to it from a soirée at which I had been introduced to several young Russian poets, one or two of whom were afterwards to become my friends. One of them took me along with him to a friend's studio, where we found half a dozen young people enjoying themselves. The host was a

painter, a revolutionary, who made his living, however, by painting conventional portraits of the Tsar, one of which he turned round for our inspection amid the jeers and hoots of his friends. Among these were two or three young men, officers on leave from the Front, and, most interesting of all, an extraordinary girl of only sixteen years of age. She was a wild young creature, short-haired, wild-eyed and passionately denunciatory of Tsarism, capitalism and all their sins. Both her appearance and her name stayed in my memory, though I never saw her again; and several years later I came upon her again in the Russian and English papers, when she was reported to have married one of the chief Bolshevist commissaries. Then, I heard, she left him and married a Bolshevist sailor who afterwards rose in rebellion. When I want to picture a Bolshevist woman of the most intransigent type, my mind goes back to my meeting with young L—— R——.

From the studio we went on to the "Stray Dog," which we reached at four in the morning. Its little cellars were draped and covered with paintings and patterns: Pierrot, Columbine and Harlequin; the poet's miserable life and fate; Don Quixote and his jade; the bourgeois with his gramophone and novel; and other phantasies. A bright fire burned in the grate;

someone was playing the piano—ragtime; a poetess was reciting sentimental verses to an audience of officers and actresses. A youth with a powdered face and a stiff swallow-tailed collar asked his friends not to press him to read his poems now; " in twenty minutes " —very good, said they; " in a quarter of an hour "—our poet felt their lack of interest and attempted to revive them—" well, as they so much desired it, in ten minutes—well, if they must "—and they began half-heartedly to applaud—" very well, now." He climbed upon the stage, called for silence, and began to squeak with his treble voice, " Yes, dear, I will give myself to you to-night. 'Tis the hour, and I am prepared. I am more interesting than ever to-night "—he finished at last, was applauded and laughed at, regarded himself in the glass, patted his hair and smoothed his eyebrows and sat down. Everything was very thin—no wine, only tea and lemonade and omelettes and apples. And all the while a persistent voice in my ear, " Why are you so silent? Oh, you say nothing. You are always thinking, always dreaming. And I am like a princess imprisoned in a castle; without ecstasy I cannot exist. Oh, you still say nothing. You are a dull Englishman."

Then there entered a young volunteer—a poet fresh from the War. He recited a poem he

had made on the field. It was quite good. "I feel I cannot die," was the burden, "I feel the heart of my country beating through my pulse. I am its incarnation, and I cannot die."

We talked and he invited me to go to Warsaw with him, suggesting that he might be able to attach me to his regiment in some capacity. I meant to go with him, but something happened to prevent his journey. A few years later this poet, whose name was Nicholas Gumilev, came to London en route to Salonica (which he never reached, owing to the break-up of the Russian forces there) and stayed with me. Then he returned to Russia and occupied a high position in the literary association that was trying to keep Russian culture alive under and in spite of the Bolshevists. In the autumn of 1921, when I was in Moscow on my way to the Famine region, I heard that Gumilev was in prison. A fortnight later the news came that he had been shot for his part in a conspiracy that the Petrograd Bolshevists claimed to have discovered. Poor Gumilev! I have not yet met anyone, except Bolshevist propagandists, who believes that the conspiracy in which he met his death really existed.

Another experience that remains in my memory after these years is my meeting with Rasputin.

I feel a certain kinship to that connoisseur in sensations who used to boast of being kicked by one of the Georges; I cannot forget that I am the only Englishman whom Rasputin ever kissed! As kisses go, his was a mere formality in the way of a farewell; indeed, I willingly renounce the kiss as less remarkable than the fact of coming to close quarters with Rasputin at all.

Before I went to Russia, and all the time I was there, I never could make any two accounts of Rasputin tally. On the one side were the reports, usually carried to absurd length, of his foul and promiscuous bestiality; at the other extreme, we were told to see in him a mild-eyed, benevolent monk with no small powers of healing by touch and by prayer. It made the enigma more difficult when accounts given by Russians who actually professed to know about him also did not tally. They all explained to me that he was a rogue, but I soon learnt that the wickedness of Rasputin was large in proportion to the political liberalism of the reporter. Indeed, to hear the advanced intelligentsia, Rasputin's roguery seemed almost to be nothing else than the influence he used to further reaction. Whether he was a sensual hypocrite or a wonder-working mystic, no one was prepared to tell me. This, however, was a very important difference in

such an autocracy as Russia then was; for, since all authority and direction were centred in one small and irresponsible group at the Court, the slightest movement there was likely to have enormous consequences outside. It was not enough to know that Rasputin was an influential person who set his influence on the side of reaction; it was quite as important to know the nature of the influence he used.

Was it due to his own personality, or to the general circumstances at the Court? Was he a force in himself, with the potentiality of provoking action on his own initiative, or was he only an unconscious tool in other hands? None of my friends, as I say, knew for certain whether Rasputin was a prophet or a satyr.

Moreover, he was supposed to have a very special claim to the Imperial favour. There is a tradition in Russia, the land of myths, that Alexander I, who died and was buried in 1825 at Taganrog (a port on the Sea of Azof and Chehov's birthplace), did not really die there, but fled from the place in disguise and made his way to Siberia, spreading a false report of his own death in order to escape the plots of revolutionaries. He then spent the rest of his life at a monastery in Tomsk, where, indeed, some garments, alleged to be his, are still displayed. I heard a fable that Nicholas II believed this theory and visited the

monastery in state, and rumour even declared that he had privately acknowledged this same Gregory Rasputin as the grandson of the Imperial refugee, and thus as a rightful heir to the Throne !

The longer I remained in Russia the more I felt inclined to see this strange man for myself. I made careful inquiries, and at last found a way of reaching Rasputin, unapproachable though he was supposed to be. One morning I procured a copy of his book, *My Thoughts*, a diary of his journey to the Holy Land, which had just been published in a hole-and-corner way. When I had looked through it, I went to the flat of one of Rasputin's intimate acquaintances and rang up the telephone number he told me. A gruff voice answered, and, by good luck, it was Rasputin himself. I hastily explained that I had been reading his book, and, as a foreigner, had been particularly impressed by his pleas for the unity of Christendom ; could I come to hear more of this from him ? He told me to come at once, and, after a certain time, I called at No. 64 in the Gorohavaya, where I knew Rasputin lived. When I rang the bell of the flat, the door was opened on a chain, and a slut of about fourteen asked me what I wanted. I recognised her from descriptions as Rasputin's daughter and housekeeper ; after a parley she shut the door on me

and went to make inquiries. While she was gone, a man approached me from the stairs, obviously a plain-clothes detective. He told me that it was useless to wait; Rasputin never received visitors. Then he rang the bell in a peculiar way, and was at once admitted by the girl. I waited a little while, and went away. I again telephoned to Rasputin, who promised to admit me. Surely enough, when I called again half an hour later, I was admitted at once and led into a kind of waiting-room. As I sat there, various important-looking men came out from a conference with Rasputin, and one or two ladies in fashionable clothes were admitted to the flat. After about a quarter of an hour, Rasputin came to me. He wore a not very clean blue blouse, breeches, and top boots, like a peasant, and walked with a clumsy roll. He drew up a chair in front of me and leaned forward on it, so that our eyes were less than a foot apart. I asked one or two questions, and he delivered emphatic answers not much to the point. He spoke the rather archaic Russian of the Church and the monasteries, and illustrated his meaning by waves and passes of his hands. These, combined with the closeness of his very bright and expressive eyes, made me feel a little uncomfortable. He had also a knack of answering my question before I had quite

finished asking it, which is a very effective trick, and one not practised by Rasputin alone. Occasionally, he was inaccurate in guessing the unspoken rest of my questions; but, on the whole, he showed considerable shrewdness.

To be faced by two piercing eyes not a foot away from your own is excessively disconcerting; when, in addition, the person to whom the eyes belong is sitting in his own stuffy and (to you) unfamiliar room, and is making mesmeric passes with his hands, there is every excuse for confusion. I cannot deny that I felt horribly uncomfortable; finally, I pulled myself together with the thought that at least Rasputin could not be clairvoyant, since he did not realise my real purpose in coming to him. This notion saved me from losing my nerve, and I held out to the end of the conversation. I asked him to give me formal permission to translate his book. He did so and signed it; it is a curious and almost undecipherable scrawl.

As I said, we kissed when we parted, and he invited me to call again without the least desire that I should do so. I might have doubted the evidence of my eyes and ears, and have been so much impressed by his certainly hypnotic (if not clairvoyant) powers as to believe in his prophetic nature—had he not written that hopeless book. "And I saw with

my own eyes," he wrote, "that the Turks wear the same clothes as Christians and Jews. For the fulfilment of the word of Our Lord is at hand, that there shall be one orthodox Church without distinction of dress." I agree that very probably Rasputin did not write all the book, nor half of it, but he certainly claimed the authorship with considerable pride when I was speaking to him. He assured me that it was a good book, but I had already assured myself that it was a very foolish one—and that, therefore, Rasputin was in sufficiently important respects a foolish man. I found him shrewd and probably hypnotic, but neither clairvoyant nor wise. And this, I think, is probably the true estimate of Rasputin.

VIII

RUSSIA IN RUINS

FOR two or three years I was unable to return to Russia, and when at last I went, it was to a very different country from before. I went out in the autumn of 1919 to follow General Denikin's campaign against the Bolshevists, whom he was driving back upon Moscow. I took a boat from Liverpool to Constantinople, whence I left for Batum on an American destroyer. Batum I found sadly changed. There was a British occupation of the province, a duty that had been laid upon us by the Allies and which held no advantages for us. The French and the Italians also were supposed to send troops to assist in freeing the Caucasus from the Turks and garrisoning it against our enemies, but both of them were too busy playing their own complicated games of politics to be able to find occasion to send us help. True, our own representatives at Constantinople were seemingly not innocent of political intrigues; I have never seen so many generals, English, French and Italian,

determined to shine as diplomats and failing utterly. The result for the Caucasus, however, was that we were left in sole charge and, although it was in everybody's interests that we should garrison the whole of the Caucasus, we were soon forced by lack of numbers to restrict our control to the port and Province of Batum.[1]

Our military occupation of Batum was not a great success in any than the military sense. The British officers there, most of them well-intentioned and (in their proper line of work) very competent men, were rather at sea in the difficult atmosphere of Batum. Not a single officer or man spoke Russian fluently—they were just a body of troops sent from Macedonia and Constantinople—and they had to rely upon local interpreters, who were in many cases extremely unsatisfactory persons. The trust that each officer reposed in his own Greek, Jewish or hopelessly denationalised interpreter and the contempt he rightly held for everybody else's were wonderful to behold. It was no marvel that every Russian, Georgian, Kurd, Adjarian, Armenian, Greek, Persian and so on in the Province had his own com-

[1] A full account of the British occupation of the Batum Province, as also of my experiences in South Russia with General Denikin's armies and in the independent Caucasian States, may be found in my book *In Denikin's Russia and the Caucasus, 1919–1920.*

ARMENIAN SOLDIERS

plaint against the British administration. As an unofficial and unattached Englishman with many friends among the inhabitants of the Province I had an opportunity to see both sides of the matter. Nobody knew better than I how hard the British authorities worked to make their administration successful, but again no one saw more clearly how they were failing to make it popular. Still, at least they kept the peace and gave the Province nearly two years of such comparative quiet and comfort as it had long not known and has not since enjoyed. Besides, as one of our officers remarked as he dolefully added up the long monthly list of murders, robberies with violence, thefts and other crimes in Batum, it was not as bad as in Ireland during the same period.

I spent a certain time at the bungalow where I had lived so happily a few years before, and then I went to Tiflis to examine at first hand the charms of the new independent Georgian Republic. I found that Georgian chauvinism had run wild, and was daily running wilder. Nothing was too idiotic for the Georgian politicians to try to do in the sacred name of patriotism and Social-Democracy. From the War Minister who proudly showed me a list of Bolshevists just executed for rebellion, and who a few months later assured Mr. Ramsay

Macdonald that under no circumstances did the Republic of Georgia use violence against the Bolshevists who were endeavouring to upset its Government, to the Foreign Minister who helped to despatch an army into the Batum Province with orders to drive out the British garrison and who, when the army of three hundred men was captured and interned by a British force consisting of two youthful Irish subalterns and ten sepoys, promptly requested the British administration of the Province to allow him to send up food through our lines to his men, nothing that the Georgian Government did was bereft of the true spirit of *opéra bouffe*. It was commonly stated in Batum that the Georgian Government at that time had agreements with the Tartars of Baku against the Armenians, and with the Armenians against the Tartars, with us against the Turks, and with the Turks against us, with the Bolshevists against General Denikin, and with other people against the Bolshevists, with the Germans against the Allies, and with the latter against the Germans, to say nothing of similarly involved relations with the numerous upstart Republics and Governments of Daghestan and the other wild Mohammedan mountain countries of the North Caucasus. I cannot vouch for the accuracy of the whole of this accusation, but I do certify that it sums up

the pleasing spirit of opportunism that was displayed by the Georgian leaders, who always claimed, however, that their political programme and methods were strictly in accordance with the doctrines and practice of the British Independent Labour Party!

The Tartars of Baku, whom I visited later, were led by men of much the same stamp. In both cases the outcome of their policies was the same. The moment that the Bolshevists, having defeated Denikin, decided to enter their respective territories, the local Governments disappeared with much clatter and no real resistance. Their respective Republics collapsed like card houses and the Bolshevists walked in unopposed. True, the Tartar army is said to have put up a resistance for a quarter of an hour, and the Georgians for nearly three times that period; but then, as we all knew these armies, this did not surprise us. The speed at which the troops of these young Republics could move astonished even the most experienced European officers; it remains to be said that it was in retreat only that this excellence was displayed.

The only people for whom I acquired respect were the Armenians. When I went to Armenia I was astonished to find that, with all their many faults, the Armenians stood head and shoulders above their neighbours not

only in intelligence but also in courage. Ever since the day when I first visited the trenches in which a miserably small and ill-equipped Armenian force was resisting a far more numerous and better armed army of Kurds and Turks, I have had an admiration for this people, so basely betrayed by the Allies with whom, alone of all the peoples of the Caucasus, they have always kept faith, and who have requited them with neglect, forgetfulness, broken pledges—how many of these!—and even definite hostility. We could so easily have kept our promises to the Armenians, with some advantage and little cost to ourselves; but we have not done so. To us and to the Allies as a whole, the desertion of Armenia is a little thing, easily to be forgotten, still more easily to be slurred over with pleas of necessity (which are not wholly true) and counter-charges of treachery against the Armenians (which are unjust); but to Armenia it has meant the difference between freedom and renewed slavery, and its repercussions still shake the basis of our prestige (which is the earnest of our power) in the Middle East.

I came to Denikin's country by steamer from Batum to Novorossisk, and arrived there just in time to come into contact with a particularly disagreeable storm. The "Nord-Ost," as it is called—the North East wind—covers the

hills round the town with clouds, and drives the sea and the water inside the harbour into fury. Ships drag their anchors; motor-boats and fishing vessels turn turtle; and on shore one has to fight one's way through the streets, clinging to railings, fences and door-handles, always at the risk of losing one's grip and being blown away or of being frost-bitten where one stands. It was a gloomy introduction to Denikin's Russia. I soon went up the railway line to Rostov, which was Denikin's administrative headquarters.

I doubt if the world has ever seen a place and an occasion where human feelings were so highly strung as they were in Rostov. The excitement of a Spanish crowd at a bull-fight or of a mob of gamblers in an Italian casino seems dull and lifeless when I contrast it with the atmosphere in which we lived day after day under Denikin. We did not know —Denikin himself did not know, and certainly the Bolshevists did not know—whether he would capture Moscow and drive out the Bolshevists or whether they would take Rostov and expel him and his armies from Russia. For all the Russians who were crowded behind Denikin's lines, and for the millions in the rest of Russia, the issue was either liberation or a living death under the Communists—with a considerable chance of actual death. Every-

where there prevailed the gambling atmosphere. One alternated between moods of utter despair and merriment. I have never seen so much anguish and so much laughter, amazingly intermingled. It was simply hysterical, and we knew it. Perhaps the only people who were calm were the English officers who were there; they were not many and were acting almost entirely in an advisory capacity. The aid we were supposed to be giving Denikin was more considerable on paper than in fact; with a quarter of the trouble and a little more intelligence we might really have assisted him to take Moscow; as it was, our policy of pouring munitions and equipment pell-mell into Russia really aided the Bolshevists as much as their opponents. The British officers entered very little into the world of the Russians around them, and did not see much of the whirlpool of emotions in which this was set. But having most of my friends among the Russians and living with them, I came into direct contact with it. Indeed, at one moment I felt I was seeing rather too much of it. For instance, I found that a Russian friend with whom I was sharing a small room was suffering from small-pox, from which he soon afterwards died; that another friend, from whom I had to take leave, would be unable to escape from the advancing Bolshe-

CADETS AT NOVOROSSISK

vists and felt himself already almost certain to be shot by them ; that it was not impossible for me too to be cut off and captured by the Bolshevists, no pleasant prospect at that time ; then I came across a row of typhus patients at a railway station who were dying before my eyes of disease, hunger and cold ; thousands upon thousands of cases of typhus were decimating the population ; every night there were alarms in the streets and the suburbs as the bandits, the so-called " Green Guards," who were harassing the defeated Whites, endeavoured to take advantage of their demoralisation before the regular Bolshevist forces arrived ; and, to crown all, the weather broke into a period of alternate frosts and thaws, until we came to live in a desolate and windy chaos of mud, snow, misery, hunger and disease. It was a nightmare—a true nightmare, for everything was fantastic, out of proportion and impossible to foresee. A few weeks before, Denikin's armies had been within a hundred miles of Moscow ; now they were being swiftly driven out—or rather, were fleeing—not only from their advanced positions but from their capital, Rostov, from Ekaterinodar, the next capital, and so back to the coast at Novorossisk. How had this happened ? Not by any remarkable staunchness of the Bolshevist armies, which were as poor fight-

ing material as Denikin's, but simply because the Whites had suddenly lost their nerve and began to run away. Their rapid advance upon Moscow had equally been due to the swift retreat of the Reds ; and now in turn they were on the run, and the Reds pursued. In one sense the fighting in these campaigns was farcical. There was practically no fighting. Whichever force thought itself outnumbered or outflanked would begin to desert to the enemy, and there were few casualties on the field of battle. Yet the death-rate was enormous. Typhus alone slew its thousands and its tens of thousands. Other diseases, also due to dirt, mud and hunger, killed the soldiers on both sides savagely. I would sometimes meet men or women who had been through these campaigns, as combatants, nurses or simple refugees, and I could tell from their faces and their eyes what they had endured, even though they were now hundreds of miles away from the scene of their sufferings. For I was witnessing the most terrible of all sights, the demoralisation of a whole people. On all sides was death in a hundred horrible forms, death and separation from one's parents, friends and children. All was lost, and everyone was lost. It was a country of the damned.

This was my second visit to Russia, a terrible and unforgettable experience.

The next time I visited Russia was in the autumn of 1921, when by chance I found myself able to go to Moscow and the famine region of the Volga as a newspaper correspondent. I was one of the first batch of independent correspondents—certainly the first "hostile" writer—to enter the forbidden land; until then, only the representatives of papers definitely friendly to the Bolshevists had been allowed in. We did not know what to expect; but I had been with Denikin and had seen at first hand the dreadful collapse of Russia after the Revolution, and I wondered what our reception would be. Was I re-entering the mad nightmare atmosphere I had been in a year before? Or should I find that dullness and despair ruled in Moscow, as so many people who had escaped from the Bolshevists to Denikin's country—which, poor things, they called a Paradise after what they had been through!—had told me was the case under the Soviet regime? The second alternative was the truth. Moscow was a dead city. The first day I was there I counted barely half a dozen ragged pedestrians at noon in the busiest square in the town. The houses were crumbling and decaying

with neglect; the people walked through the streets with downcast heads and slow, weary steps. Everyone was under-nourished in body and exhausted in mind.

The Bolshevists had just introduced their new economic policy, which permitted once again the principles of private trading; they were now Communists only in name. They were for the most part men and women who had had before the Revolution a grudge against the world, often a well-grounded one —I can imagine the feelings of a young peasant on my old employer's estate—and who now were gloating, consciously or unconsciously, over the manner in which the life of the country had been destroyed and its old rulers and privileged classes humbled in the dirt, good and bad alike. For them—consciously or unconsciously, I repeat—it did not matter that all Russia was suffering in a chaos of misery, so long as these classes were ruined. I do not blame the Bolshevists for all the horror that has overtaken Russia; to do so would be to credit them with too much ability and power. Their strength lay rather in their uncanny success in preventing anybody else from making a definite move towards the restoration of Russia. By their new alteration of policy the Bolshevists had virtually admitted the failure of the programme in the name of which

they had fought and conquered and destroyed —or rather, encouraged and condoned the destructiveness of the mob; but it never occurred to them that they were blameworthy in this respect. Very many of their chiefs were Jews and Poles, but in one respect they were more Russian than the Russians; they were, and are, the victims of their own diseased nerves. Hate, revenge, fantastic Utopianism, complete mental inconsequence—they were ruled by such passions as these.

I found that their victims did not regard them as seriously as the outside world is inclined to do. To the average Russian, I mean, the Bolshevists were not so much the cause of the ruin of Russia as a symbol of it. The Russians look at their country now as doctors regard an invalid; the increase of Bolshevist power seems to them like the gradual extension of the dominion of disease germs in an ailing organism. One does not blame the germs for increasing, but one realises that only their eradication can allow a cure to take place; nobody in Russia hopes to see Russia restored to the world while the Bolshevists remain in power. These have too often changed their policy before for anyone to hope that their new and apparent surrender to the West may be taken as a lasting phase. When they feel that it is possible, every Russian I talked to

thought, the Bolshevists will again strive to put their ideals into practice, undeterred by their previous failure.

Moscow was a city of death, of death in life. Despair, long-suffering and dull misery were the characteristics of its inhabitants. They had suffered so much and for so long that they had forgotten what life really meant. It was, however, as safe to ramble through the streets of Moscow at night, through the darkness and emptiness of the place, as I had found it in the old days to explore the ruins of the dozen ancient cities that encumber the plains outside Delhi. Only ghosts were to be feared, but one bore the worst of these in one's own memories.

When I went to the Volga to examine the famine conditions,[1] I found that the same atmosphere reigned in the provincial cities. The world was empty, and years of everybody's life were being wasted; the only living thing in the minds of the inhabitants was the thought, "When will it all end?" And to this they had no answer.

I saw thousands of refugees from the starving villages gathered around the stations and in the market-places of the Volga towns, dying and waiting for death. These peasants, emaciated, verminous and exhausted, had not

[1] See my *Through Starving Russia.*

IN BOLSHEVIST MOSCOW

even a question in their minds. They had become more animal than human, and more like corpses than living beings. There were, of course, rare exceptions amidst this desolation of humanity. I met in Samara two men who still retained enough energy of mind and body to seem to be normal human beings. One was a sailor, a young man who had seen many sides of life, and in whom there still remained hope; but I felt that he too was gradually being enveloped in the marsh fog of misery that hung over the whole country. The other was a Red Army commander whom ambition and military success still kept alert. With him as a companion I went for a journey down the Volga on a river steamer. He wanted me to visit the town in which he was both the military and the civil chief, but it was too far off my route for this to be possible. But I went with him part of the way, and together we watched the river sweeping towards the distant sea, leaning over the side of the vessel and talking. He reminded me that we were not far from the scene of the exploits of the famous insurgent Pugachov, who terrorised the whole of these regions at the close of the seventeenth century, and of the still more romantic river pirate of a hundred years before, Stenka Razin, a well-known Russian popular ballad about whom I venture to translate here:

Stenka Razin and the Persian Princess

From behind their island shelter
To the middle of the stream,
Gaily painted, sharply pointed,
Stenka Razin's vessels came.

On the first sat Stenka Razin
With the princess by his side;
Merrily was he carousing
With his newly wedded bride.

From behind them came a murmur—
"He has bartered us for you!
But one night spent there beside her.
He's become a woman too!"

The drunken chieftain hearkened
To the mocking and the cries;
And his black brows came together,
And the fierce blood filled his eyes."

Then he laid his arm upon her,
And his voice rose to a roar;
His mighty words resounded
Far across the neighbouring shore:

"I'll give all without repining,
I would give my own wild head!"—
And the Persian princess shuddered,
She was neither live nor dead—

"Volga, Volga, Russian river,
Volga, thou belovèd one,
Hast thou never seen a present
From a Cossack of the Don?

" That there may be no dissension
Between people who are free,
Volga, Volga, mother Volga,
Take this fair maid unto thee ! "

Then he clasped his arm about her,
And raised up the fair princess ;
And overboard he flung her
To the waters merciless.

" What, you devils, melancholy !
Come, a dance ! Where's Phil, my fool ?
Ho, comrades, troll a chorus
For the resting of her soul ! "

From behind their island shelter
To the middle of the stream,
Gaily painted, sharply pointed,
Stenka Razin's vessels came.

At one pier, as we had to wait for a few hours while some repairs were being made to the engines, I landed from the boat and walked towards the nearest village. This was not a large place ; its only reason for existing was the fact that the steamers called near by and it had grown up to serve the needs of travellers arriving and departing here. There were perhaps not more than sixty or seventy houses altogether, with a population of some four hundred or five hundred. As I came to the hamlet I saw the most significant sign of the effects of the famine—the windmill was

not moving. This indeed was sensational, for it signified that already the whole of the harvest which in the ordinary way serves to feed the peasants for a year—to say nothing of the amounts they put aside for sale to other parts of Russia and as stores against the possibility of a bad harvest the next year—had already been ground. As the harvest had only been in a few days it meant that the peasants would have food only for a week or two.

I walked up to the main entrance of the village, a gate in the encircling stockade where a rough country road entered. As I passed through it, a peasant lying near by looked up at me and then looked away again. He was the village watchman appointed to warn villagers of any attempts that might be made either to attack them or to interfere with the stocks of corn and hay which are usually reposing in their barns and their sheds at this time of year. But his position was a sinecure now because, as I could see, the enclosures where the hay is usually kept were practically empty except for a few knee-high mounds of discoloured grass, while I did not need to be told that the barns for corn, set out in rows like huge bee-hives, were absolutely empty.

I walked along the broad roadway that ran between the first two rows of log-cabins. Except for the watchman, there was not a soul

to be seen. I reached almost the other end of the village before I came across any signs of life, but at last an old peasant came slowly and painfully out of his hut and stared at me. I asked him, for want of anything better to say, where the village Soviet was housed.

"Come along with me," he said, "and I will show you."

I walked with him through another of the broad spaces that intersected the houses and, as we went, I asked him a few questions about the extent of the famine. Naturally he did not see the thing as a general disaster; he looked at it purely from the point of view of himself and of the other peasants of his village. Pointing to a house we were passing, he said:

"These people's son came back here the other day from Moscow. He came to see if he could not take his parents away with him; they had sent him word that they were hungry. But he came here too late. Three days before he came, they went away and nobody knows where they have gone to."

Passing another house he said: "The man who owned this house ate it and went away." Then he explained to me that he meant that the man gave the house as fuel to one of his neighbours in exchange for a little flour. In the same way the peasants are said to eat their

land, their horses, their cattle and their household goods.

As we approached the Soviet we saw the remains of the old Manor House on a little piece of rising ground on our left. I asked the peasant what had become of the old owner and what the place was used for nowadays. He replied that the owner had gone away, he did not know where, and that while most of the land that belonged to him had been distributed among the peasants, a part of it around the house had been kept by the State as a Soviet farm, to which parties of workmen from the towns were supposed to come in their holidays and cultivate it. But, as I could see, the place had been allowed to grow wild and there were no signs of cultivation. The house itself, the old peasant told me, was going to be used as a school or museum or something of that kind at some future date. "Up to the present," he said, "the only use to which it has been put is as an '*agitpoint.*'"

An "agitpoint" is a Soviet abbreviation of the words "agitation point," that is to say, a propagandist centre where Bolshevist literature is kept, Bolshevist papers provided for the peasantry to read and propagandist lectures delivered by occasional official agitators.

We came at last to the Soviet, which was distinguished from the other houses by a faded

red rag hanging over the entrance. We entered, but inside there were only one or two old women and an old man who was lying on the floor covered with a sheet and moaning. Nobody appeared to take any notice of him, but when I asked one of the women what was the matter with him, she said he was hungry.

They told me that the president of the Soviet was out in the fields with the other men, ploughing, and asked me if I was an official from the towns, a question which they put without any sign of enthusiasm whatever. But when I told them that I was a foreign visitor who had just got off the boat they brightened up, and the old peasant who accompanied me and whose shyness had now almost worn off, began to ask me questions.

" Is it true that people are living in other countries just as they did in the old days ? I went to Moscow last year. I used to work there when I was a young man, but now I cannot recognise the city. Is it true that your cities are just the same as they used to be ? "

I replied that they were pretty much the same and that we lived in the same way except that living had got much dearer—two or three times dearer at least.

" Three times dearer ! Here it is a thousand times dearer. A rouble is now a kopeck or a

hundredth part of a kopeck. In the towns bread used to cost a few kopecks a pound, but now it costs 5000 roubles."

And the old women joined in with long, shrill complaints about prices and the lack of order and the requisitions of the Government. But still they did not say a word about the famine.

I decided to go along with the old peasant and find some of the other men in the fields.

I asked him point-blank how much flour he had to carry him over until the next harvest, and he replied that he had got only about four poods—144 lb. I asked him how long this would last and he answered :

" We are nine souls. If we ate real bread it would not last us a month, but this is the sort of stuff we are eating now," and he pulled out of his pocket a substance that did not even look like bread. It was a strange coppery colour. He handed it to me and I saw that it was a compound of various things : there was a certain amount of flour, of various kinds of flour ; but this did not compose a large proportion of the stuff. The rest was apparently made of bits of chopped-up grass and leaves and, above all, clay ; and there were one or two dark-coloured ingredients that I could not recognise at all.

" Is this bread ? " he said with a bitter laugh.

One by one he counted over the various substances that composed the "bread," holding it meantime in his hand.

"This," he said, "is real flour. This is flour made from the seeds of sorrel and pigweed and other plants of that kind. And this—" he pointed to the dark splashes of colour that puzzled me—"this we make by crushing up insects. And this is clay from the river banks." And he mentioned other still less agreeable ingredients.

I asked him if the clay that they used was just ordinary clay, and he told me that certain kinds of clay were supposed to be more nutritious than others.

"But is it bread?" he repeated. "No, it is simply a stone for the peasant to fill his stomach with and to feel that he is eating something. Just look at me"—he pulled up his blouse and showed me how emaciated his body was. Just then a little child came round the corner of one of the houses. Far from being thin, this child's belly was protruding in a huge curve. The old peasant called the child and she came listlessly towards us.

"Just feel here," said the peasant, and we touched her swollen stomach with our fingers. Her body was curiously hard. The swelling was due partly to the amount of stuff that she had had to eat in order to get enough nourish-

ment to keep her alive and also, so the peasant said, because the ingredients of the bread hardened inside her and remained there.

Then we came to the first sign of livestock in the village. A pig came in our direction, thinner than any pig I had ever seen before. To say that its ribs were sticking through its hide would be to give too simple a picture of this walking skeleton of an animal.

"Just look at it," said the peasant; "and we have not many left even in this state."

We came at last to the fields where the men were working. The ground was as hard as stone and the primitive wooden ploughs that the peasants were using hardly made an impression on its surface. The horses pulling the ploughs were bags of skin and bone.

"How can you sow," I asked the peasant, "when the ground is so dry? Surely the birds will eat the seed as fast as you sow it?"

He looked at me shrewdly and said: "Why do you think that we shall sow the seed when we get it?"

"But why are you ploughing the land then?"

"Because if we do not plough the land, we shall not be given any seed corn."

Then I understood that, in this village at any rate, the peasants did not intend to sow the seed corn at all. They were making a pretence of ploughing their land only in order

to become entitled to a certain amount of seed corn from the neighbouring towns, which they would eat as soon as they got it.

The other peasants gradually collected around. When my guide told them that I was a foreigner who had come to the village to visit them they looked at me with a certain interest, but for the most part they seemed incapable any longer of caring at all for what was going on around them, or even for what was happening to themselves.

I asked them a few questions about the progress of the famine in their village, and they replied in a stolid, matter-of-fact way that this was the second year of bad harvest, that their stores had either been used for food or plundered by detachments of the Red Army and requisitioned for the towns, and that they would now surely die. They did not say this with any suggestion of self-pity but merely as if it were the most natural thing in the world.

I told them that both the Bolshevists and foreign countries were trying to send relief; and the latter piece of information appeared somewhat to interest them.

"Will it come soon?" they asked. But at the same time I felt that they did not really believe it was coming and that they were still certain that in a few weeks, or months at the

outside, they would come to the end of their supplies and perish.

When I asked them if many of the villagers had gone away, they said that in the spring, when it became obvious from the lack of rain and the incredible heat that the crops this year would be ruined, many amongst them did decide to migrate. Some went to Siberia, others to Tashkend, and others simply took the steamer down the river to any town where they thought they might find work and food; but now the migrations had temporarily ceased, since those who had remained had, many of them, got in a small harvest and for the time being they were living upon this, eking it out with the various surrogates that they baked in with their flour.

I asked them what they would do when this tiny stock came to an end. They replied simply:

"We shall die."

I explained to them that I meant would they not migrate like the others did? They replied:

"What use will that be? Our horses will be dead and we shall be hungry. We shall have nothing to sell and nothing to live on and we shall be too weak to work. It is better to die in one's own village than among strangers."

It was clear that they were bewildered by their fate.

These Volga Provinces have always been the granary of Russia and even in the worst years hitherto there has never been such a famine as the present, when every crop had failed and little help was coming in from the outside. The peasants had few complaints and no hope. I got the impression that they were almost ashamed of what had happened, as if they themselves were in some way responsible for it. From more than one of them I heard such remarks as this :

" We have sinned and become like beasts ; and now we are being punished for it."

It was time that I got back to my steamer, the funnel of which I could see some distance away over the empty fields. I took farewell of the peasants who turned again to their hypocritical task of ploughing the burnt-up soil, and returned to the village with the old peasant who had attached himself to me.

The village was just as empty as when I left it. The houses were all shut and, though in one part I saw a couple of women carrying heavy pails of water on poles across their shoulders, followed by their listless children, there seemed no other signs of life. The old peasant left me as we came to his house and, sitting down on the trunk of a tree by his own

door, he pulled out the horrible lump of bread from his pocket and munched it without relish.

I made my way to the gate of the village and found the sentinel still lying in the same place and watching the empty barns. And then I came out into the plain which was dancing in the heat of the scorching sun. A few crows flew up from the white skeleton of a horse lying near the roadside, but otherwise I saw nothing living until I got back to the pier. There a few parties of refugees, as emaciated and hopeless as the peasants in the villages, were sitting with their children and their chattels, apparently waiting, as they had been in some cases for weeks, for someone or something to help them to get away from this "abomination of desolation."

IX

MEDITERRANEAN MEMORIES

§ 1. Arcadia

LITERALLY and in the flesh—*et ego in Arcadia fui!* It is not very difficult in these days. One reaches Arcadia by train and motor-car from Athens in the course of a single day; and, if you are an Englishman, it is worth the trouble. For, apart from the beauties of the place and the romantic associations, one enters as an honoured stranger. In every village the first question is, "Are you French or English?" If you reply that you are English, the full force of Arcadian hospitality is turned upon you. Not once in my journey through Arcadia was I allowed without a struggle to pay for my own food. Not only did innkeepers suggest that the presence of an Englishman was so agreeable to them that they could not ask for payment, but even casual acquaintances insisted upon paying for me. On one occasion I even had trouble in paying for my shoes to be shined; it was in a village street, and I

had just got into conversation with an old gentleman who lived there; and he made a frightful scene when I refused to allow the little bootblack to take his money for my shoe-shine.

As soon as I arrived in a village a search would be made for someone who could speak English! There was never long to wait, even in the smallest villages. The interpreter would be a man who had spent some years in America. There is a prodigious number of such men in Greece; even in the remotest spots, there was always some one or other to hail me with a hospitable "Say, stranger!" Greek-American-English is a curious dialect, and it is uncommonly widespread.

In Karytaena, a little mountain village in the middle of Arcadia (where, by the way, I was entertained at lunch by a Greek gentleman who, he told me, owned a restaurant in Montgomery, Alabama, where he invited me to call whenever I passed that way), I was sitting in the café when two men came in who were obviously Arcadians of the Arcadians. They were clad in true peasant garb. Their heads were covered with a black kerchief, fastened under the chin. They wore a striped linen shirt, the curious short white petticoat that is characteristic of their kind, a leather

girdle with numerous pouches, white stockings without feet, and shoes the toes of which turned up and over and were decorated with tassels. Over all this they wore a roughly woven white coat, and in their hands was a shepherd's crook. Their features were classical and delicate, and a pointed beard and upturned moustaches gave them an air of dignity.

They greeted me in Greek, as I was the only other person in the place. Then they sat down and ordered slices of Turkish delight and drank a glass of water. I admired them as fine unspoiled products of the Arcadian paradise. In a few minutes one of them turned and to my astonishment spoke to me in fluent English, with an unmistakable accent. Before I had recovered from my surprise he had treated me to a glass of resinated wine. It seemed that he had spent many years in San Francisco as a labourer. Like so many others of his countrymen he had returned to his native land at the time of the first Balkan war and had remained there ever since.

When the village barber knew I was English he began to behave to me almost with veneration. Despite his ramshackle establishment and the incredibly distorting mirror, despite even the primitive utensils he used, his hand

became light as a feather while he shaved the "Inglesos"; he ran like a hare to the neighbouring café to fetch hot water; from rarely used bottles he poured fragrant ointments on my face and my hair; he shaved round and behind my ears with quite embarrassing care; he even chased away with exclamations of horrified shame the little village boys who had gathered round to see the wonderful sight. I returned to the café after the shave, and its habitués at once pressed cups of coffee upon me, which, if I attempted to refuse them, they replaced by glasses of cognac or slices of Rahat Lahoum. Leaving the village was an ordeal. Everybody came out to say and wave good-bye. Children ran up with roses. New arrivals, trying to find out what all the excitement was about, were warned with urgent gestures not to speak so loudly in the presence of the god-like stranger. Cigarettes were offered lavishly. I thanked my host, who had fed me with the best all the time I had been in the village, who had given me a bed and all the attention that an old and venerated friend could receive, who had devoted all his time exclusively to me ever since I had arrived in the village, and he replied, "Tipoti," which means, "It is nothing—don't mention it."

I walked from Karytaena along the road to Megalopolis, which was the railway station from which I intended to return to Athens. It started to rain and I was glad to get a lift in a post-wagon, drawn by mules which had previously been the property of the British forces in Macedonia and understood and obeyed only English words of command and unprintable abuse, the only words of English, by the way, that the muleteers understood. Despite frequent halts on the way for slices of Turkish delight—that strange craving of the adult Greek proletarian—and, much more rarely, glasses of cognac, we reached Megalopolis late in the evening. Here I was fortunate enough to find one of the very few hotels in the whole of Greece—including the most swagger ones in Athens—where the beds were free from parasites. The explanation, I am told, is that it was a very new, small and unknown inn. Be that as it may, I actually enjoyed a quiet night's sleep, and was able to catch the train in the morning without suffering as much as usual from the heat of the Greek noonday sun. When I reached the station I found that I had left a book behind; it was too late to return for it, so I sent a note back to the hotel, asking the proprietor to send it to my address in Athens. In a few

days the book arrived in a neat parcel with a letter in English, as follows :

" DEAR SIR, —

I send your book with the first mail who you have for goting at the hotel.

The younk man have bring et at the train but it is to lait, be cause you have going.

your kindly first

Remember the greece.

BLASIS DRACOPOULOS.

my andress,

Blasis Drakopoulos

Candy Store

Megalopolis

Arkadias "

The English language seems to be making great strides in Arcadia, even among those few adults who have never been in America (I am told, by the way, that more than one-half of the Greek men resident in Athens and the other big cities of Greece have worked in America at some time or another—an amazing proportion). I was walking early one morning along a desolate mountain road. I had not been able to sleep at the inn where I stayed, for the usual reason, and as soon as the village café opened—at three o'clock in the morning —I woke up the landlord and paid him, cursing his overpopulated bed, drank coffee

SOME ARCADIAN TYPES

at the café and went off. After I had walked three or four miles the dawn began to break and I wondered if I had not mistaken my path. At length there approached a shepherd. He greeted me in Greek, and in as many laboured words as I could command I asked him if I was on the right road. He told me I was; I thanked him; he said farewell and parted. I felt very proud of my progress in Greek. Then, as if to shame me, this excellent fellow, who was now clambering down the rocky side of the mountain, called after me at the top of his voice the following highly interesting words: "One-ee; two-ee; three-ee; four-ee; five-ee; howdo; good morning-ee; good-bye-ee; oh boy-ee."

§ 2. Smyrna

From the sea Smyrna presents an insignificant appearance. The long row of houses along the quay and the Turkish quarter on the hill behind are dwarfed by the mountains of the surrounding countryside. The boat slowly approaches its anchorage, passing English, French, Italian, Greek and other battleships, and finally swings round stern on to the shore. One is astonished to see a small battleship near by, boldly flying the flag of the Turkish Navy, for this is during the period of the Greek

occupation after the War. A glance at the quay, however, swiftly dispels one's doubts. There one sees only Greek names, Greek signs and Greek sailor gendarmes. An English officer examines passports; the passenger is landed at the customs house; promptly a Greek corporal assumes charge of you. This Greek speaks no tongue but his own; you, to be sure, do not know much modern Greek, and ancient Greek will not help you. There are no interpreters to be seen. By signs and gestures, with voluminous explanations, the corporal demands your passport. You show it, but naturally refuse to leave it in his charge. He grows visibly (and audibly) less and less polite; the bewildered passenger grasps his open passport and waits for the storm to pass over. At last, amidst a volley of shouts and gesticulations, one evades the corporal, calls a cab and drives away. It is only right to say that the soldier's senior officers afterwards apologise for him; but he certainly does not make a good first impression. After all, one thinks, surely someone might be found who spoke French, if not English. We drive down the quay to a friend's house. The road is badly paved with big, uneven stone blocks, which jolt the carriage from side to side and threaten it with a fall. A shabby tram, with

inside accommodation only, slowly approaches on the single tram-line; some thirty people are riding in it, but it is drawn by a solitary horse. The cruelty of the thing is revolting; the thin beast can barely drag the load along; besides, he is badly shod and the road is uneven. It is best to avert one's eyes. In the numerous cafés sit groups of civilians and sailors of all nationalities, listening to the playing and singing of the vivacious Greek orchestras. Suddenly a Turkish gendarme passes, with the familiar crescent and star in his grey fur hat. But he is an anachronism; a little further on are a couple of Greek sailors, armed with rifles and fixed bayonets, in conversation with a patrol of Greek soldiers similarly equipped. These are the real guardians of the town; the other is merely a subordinate who has not yet acquired a new uniform. At last we reach our friend's house, a spacious building overlooking the harbour. Now we are free to roam the town. But not the sea. Before he can go aboard the ship again, the passenger must show a special permit from the police, who are eager to prevent any inhabitant from taking French leave of Smyrna.

In the day-time Smyrna is a gay enough place. The streets are incredibly narrow and winding; even in the main thoroughfares, the

Frank and St. George Streets, two carriages can pass only with the most skilful manœuvring. In most of the others this must be altogether impossible. During the day these streets are packed with crowds of pedestrians of all nationalities. One hears every language under the sun, but especially Greek, Turkish, French, English and Armenian. The rich Armenian ladies trip through the streets—the word "trip" may be taken here in both its meanings—clad in garments of exquisite Parisian cut and the inevitable high-heeled shoes. Jostling beside them you may see a peasant in gaudy rags, carrying a basket of fruit from his farm; these contrasts serve the more effectively to set off the charms and dress of the ladies. During the last few years some motor-cars and motor-cycles have been brought into the city. Their machinery soon gets out of order on these frightful roads, but while they last they constitute a new peril for pedestrians. A loud hooting or whistling announces their approach; the many-hued crowd surges to the sides of the road and rushes into the shop doors, and with a jerk and a crash and a bump the automobile passes by. There is little comfort or pleasure in motoring in Smyrna.

Although no roads in the world are so badly paved as these, nowhere is more attention

paid to one's clothes. An Armenian lady of my acquaintance, returning from a visit to England, was nearly disowned by her family on the quay at Smyrna because she landed from the boat in a tweed costume and a pair of brogues. The same fastidiousness is shown in regard to the rest of one's attire. The ring-leaders in this modishness are the rich Armenian families, of whom there are here a great number. They are mostly engaged in the Manchester trade; the various partners in the firms take turns to come to England and manage the Manchester end of the business; there is consequently a large colony of Smyrna Armenians at Manchester and in its suburbs, and it is by way of these that the fashions come to Smyrna. For the same reason the shops in the main streets of the city and in the Turkish bazaars as well are stocked with Manchester goods, although there is a notable shortage of other European wares. The whole proletariat of Smyrna seems to be clothed by Manchester; the charming designs and hues that distinguish the dress of the frequenters of the bazaars are the work of Manchester, being, of course, reproductions of Asiatic originals.

The social centre of the town is Costi's well-known café. His two unpretentious rooms, with their French cooking and famous Smyrna

ices—the best in the world, it is said—are among the few public places in the town where etiquette permits ladies to appear. There are a certain number of other restaurants, especially upon the quay, but most of them are out of bounds for ladies in such a nest of scandal as Smyrna. Indeed, Smyrna is poorly provided with amusements. A company of Greek players occasionally visits the town; but for the most part, Mrs. and Miss Smyrna have to be content to ring the changes upon three or four cinematograph shows. To show how far even these are behind the rest of the world of pleasure, I may mention that I found one of them at the end of 1919 announcing the first appearance in Smyrna of "the renowned comic, M. Charles Chaplin." The best pastime in Smyrna is undoubtedly to visit the Turkish bazaars. The visitor may be shocked at first by the superabundance of Manchester goods; but if he will take the trouble to look carefully round the arcades, he will soon find many booths where fine Turkish weaving and other products of the interior are for sale. The merchant, sitting cross-legged beside his wares, will, of course, demand an exorbitant price for them; but the usual haggling, without which no transaction is complete, soon brings him down to the proper range. In the manner of the East—and formerly of the West also—

the workers in the various trades are grouped together ; the shoemakers are in one place, the jewellers in another, and so on. Picturesque caravanserais and mosques add to the charm of these bazaars ; and there are cool and shady squares, overhung with greenery, where groups of merchants sit at their ease, sipping coffee beside marble fountains. Through the doors of the mosques one sees beautiful old carpets, worn threadbare by generations of worshippers. But when the sun sets, dullness descends upon Smyrna, the Kensington of the Levant.

§ 3. Syria

Once upon a peace time—in the spring of 1914, to be precise—the Turkish Governor of Damascus was journeying by train from Haifa to Damascus. At a station beside the Sea of Galilee, the beautiful inland lake, I joined the train, and because I was the only other European the Governor politely invited me into his little private saloon carriage. I was very glad, for the country through which we began to travel was extremely dull and monotonous. After the magnificent spring-time verdure of Palestine this bare and rugged range of hills that we were now ascending was doubly tedious.

Beside the zigzagging track there was a

rough road, along which peasants were driving their herds of goats. I noticed that in places this road was being considerably widened and improved; struck by this unusual phenomenon in a country under Turkish rule, I asked the Governor how he had been able to persuade the authorities to undertake the badly needed repairs. But His Excellency changed the subject.

Innocently I happened to recall the amazing activity I had noticed in the district between Jerusalem and the Sea of Galilee; engineers were laying a railway and repairing roads there, although the projects for these improvements had been laid aside for a decade previously. Also I remarked on the interesting fact that at Nablus (Shechem) we had found a German inn, with a German landlord, which was full of good food and drink and other unusual things in the Holy Land. I said I thought it odd that the Hamburg-Amerika Steamship Line should own (as I had been told it did) this inn, so far from the sea and in so remote a neighbourhood. His Excellency again changed the subject.

Instead of answering he pointed out of the window. We had reached the summit of the range and the train was steaming towards a wide plateau. The country seemed a wilderness, grey and inhospitable. Then suddenly

I saw a mirage! Floating in the midst of this enormous sandy waste there was a glittering mosaic of domes and gardens, very small and very far away. I had no doubt that it was an illusion of the desert, but, to my surprise, he laughed and said: "That is Damascus."

As one comes down by road or railway from Damascus Beyrut is visible far below clustering on its peninsula. Two long promontories run out into the sea, forming a natural harbour, in the midst of which the city lies.

As a city, to say nothing of it as a port, Beyrut is markedly different from any other of the cities of the Holy Land. It strikes one as neither primitively Eastern, like Jaffa or Gaza, nor primly pseudo-European, like Haifa, nor both, like Damascus; it is rather a conglomeration of all types—a Turkish-Italian-French - German - Greek - Jewish - American - English-Syrian town. When I knew it in peace time it was small enough for this extraordinary miscellany of nationalities to be obvious; as you walked along the quays in the centre of the city you would hear more languages spoken than anybody except a born Levantine could possibly understand.

There were separate churches, schools and hospitals for many of the nationalities, as well as post offices under different flags. Suppose,

for example, that you wished to send a letter to England, you would probably prefer to post it at the British post office. But possibly you had information—never very reliable, by the way, in Beyrut—that a French or an Italian steamer was due to leave first, in which case you might choose to use a French stamp and post your letter at a French post office, or an Italian stamp and the Italian post office, or to send it through the German or the Turkish post.

But, walking about, you would occasionally be forced to realise that Beyrut was technically Turkish. Sometimes a rattling collecting box would be thrust under your nose and you would be asked to subscribe to the voluntary fund for buying battleships for Turkey. One's political sense was not very acute in those days —I speak of the early part of 1914—and foreigners gave willingly to the collection, feeling, as they did so, a kind of chivalric sympathy with the unpractical Turk, especially as there was before one's eyes a constant reminder of Turkish misfortunes of war, in the shape of two gun-boats, which lay half-sunken, derelict, and rusty in the midst of the busy shipping of the harbour, relics of the Italo-Turkish war. A year later one thought differently.

§ 4. Venice

Anybody who is anybody in Italy to-day tries to spend the dog-days at the seaside, the three favourite resorts being Venice, Rimini and Viareggio. And of these the greatest of course is Venice. Every schoolmaster is aware that, while Venice is on an island, or rather many islands, it is nevertheless not on the sea; it is surrounded by lagoons which are land-locked, with narrow channels to the sea. However, there is a spit of land, just across the main lagoon from Venice, called the Lido, which boasts that it has the best bathing and the best hotels in Italy, a claim which is certainly justified. You have magnificent sands and safe bathing at the door of your hotel; if you have come to Venice to show yourself off in a smart new bathing-dress which will not stand exposure to sea-water, you can loll on the *plage* and be sure to make some friends of the opposite sex. (For Venice has a bad reputation to maintain.) Then, when the sun goes down, you return to your hotel and watch the lightning quivering over the Adriatic while you eat the best dinner that is obtainable in all Italy. Incidentally you pay for these luxuries. You may stay at the one really excellent hotel on the Lido for a trifle over three hundred and fifty lire a day.

According to the post-War exchange, this is not very terrifying ; but it must be remembered that most of the visitors are, after all, Italians, for whom this sum still represents fifteen English pounds or seventy-five American dollars. It may be asked how the inhabitants of a bankrupt country, or one nearly so, can afford such prices.

The answer is simple. It is because a few Italians can afford these sums that the rest of the country is not merely poor, but violently angry at its poverty. The Italians whom one sees at the Lido are the very lucky few who have either made fortunes out of the War, or have succeeded in more or less unusual ways in maintaining their fortunes during it. When the Italian gentleman at the next table to yourself cuts himself when he eats the peas that have been brought, with other choice foods out of season, from enormous distances at huge expense, you guess rightly that his wealth is a novelty to him. And when you learn that, even before the War, a large proportion of the inhabitants of Venice were paupers, while now, on account of the price of living having risen seven times, they are so to a still greater degree, you begin to understand how it is that Italy presents a spectacle of inter-class enmity unequalled west of Russia. It is true that, on top of your bill, you pay a luxury tax of

at least ten per cent and another tax for stamps, and another yet for the "right to sojourn" at the Lido at all, and then more and more ingenious taxes of various kinds—you pay a tax in Italy now for everything, even doubtless for the privilege of paying the other taxes; but this does not directly benefit the hundred and one people in reduced circumstances whom you come across at every step. And so you have your Communists, and their counterparts on the Right, the Fascisti.

Thanks to these warring parties, it is not entirely safe even to be a tax-paying tourist in Italy to-day. You are likely at any moment to find yourself in the line of fire of groups of fighting Communists and anti-Communists. Communists are not expected to obey bourgeois-made laws; but it comes as rather a shock when you find pasted up all round the famous Piazza San Marco incendiary Fascisti proclamations, calling for vengeance for the blood of Signor So-and-so who has just been killed at Fiume in a fight with the police. You are informed gravely that the Government at Rome consists of traitors, and that it is your right, nay, your duty even, to take up arms in defiance of the Government and its laws! But even on this proclamation one finds the ubiquitous revenue stamp; the Government gets its ounce of blood even from seditious

placards. Side by side with these placards are other placards—(for these printed messages seem to have a fascination for the Italian; your Italian cannot resist the lure of large letters in public places; every wall in the country has its "Viva Lenin" and "Death to d'Annunzio," or *vice versa*, scribbled on it, the "Viva" conveniently expressed by a "W" and the opposite by the same letter inverted). These other placards will probably turn out to be pious effusions of Catholic societies urging citizens to sink their quarrels and look to the Church for guidance. If not this, then they will be exhortations from the same source urging you not to let your wives, sisters and daughters wear indecent clothes —a failing, by the way, to which Italian womanhood, at least in the North, does not seem to be much inclined. Other placards, also stamped of course, urge you to patronise somebody or other's shop, where alone, it would appear, good and genuine Venetian glass is to be obtained at reasonable prices. Of these last let the visitor beware.

I do not know anything more infuriating than discovering a Venetian glass shop which seems rather more moderate than the others, and purchasing some glass there, only to find the next day that one could have bought the same things at half the price at the little shop

next door. The worst offenders seem to be the big " old-established " firms ; presumably they too are helping the visitor to pay for the War, and they prefer to do it out of your pocket rather than out of their own. Therefore, let the visitor beware of the " respectable " shops, and try his luck in more modest establishments. Incidentally most of the " Venetian glass from our own factories " shown in Venice is not Venetian at all, but cheap stuff imported from Germany.

The German is indeed omnipresent nowadays in Italy. You will be met at the station or on the boat by an hotel porter in a hat which proclaims him to represent a " Deutsches Haus," and he will mutter sweet gutturals in your ears to attract you. You will find his countrymen everywhere in the streets, and, even if most of the shops have removed the sign that announced that " Man spricht Deutsch," you have only to enter to find that the fact has remained unchanged. It is a reconciliation that would be pleasanter if it were not combined with a definite popular feeling of hostility to Italy's allies. But fortunately the English-speaking Allies are not the worst disliked.

When one gets tired of other visitors whatever their nationality—a " Russian prince " was arrested in my presence for not paying his

hotel bill, and proved to be a gentleman from Saxony—and of guides, and glass-shop touts, and pigeons, and gondoliers, and so on, there is nothing pleasanter than a ramble through the byways of Venice. The dry part of Venice consists of a maze of beautiful old squares which are anything but square, joined to one another by narrow lanes with high stone walls.

One is reminded of nothing so much as of a huge and ingeniously constructed maze, with the canals as obstacles. You turn out of a square, hesitating whether to take the first, second, or third turning on your right. By experiment you discover that the first and second turnings end abruptly at the water's edge. A floating dead dog warns you to keep your eyes open and not to hurry along blindly. Then, when at last you have found the right way out of the square, you are again faced with the alternative of turning up several side lanes, all looking exactly alike, all extremely picturesque, but most of them leading to nowhere at all. It is possible in Venice, by taking the wrong turning, to find oneself going in precisely the opposite direction from that in which one imagines one is moving without any warning of the error.

Altogether, the best advice that can be given to the visitor to Venice is not to do any

of the things that he is supposed to, but to enjoy himself in the water on the Lido and on the dry land at Venice, and, above all, to try to look cheerful as he pays for the War, stamp by stamp.

X

IN RURAL ENGLAND

THE reason I went for a walk through rural England was rather sentimental and personal, but yet in a way connected with the conclusion of the War. I have my whole life gone about with the feeling of a distinctly foreign flavour to my existence, due to my name and no other cause whatever. I have never been quite able to persuade myself that —except for my name—I was as English as most people. I was born and brought up in London, and my home-life as a boy was as English as possible; I never heard a word of any other language. But the sentiment that I was a sort of foreigner nevertheless remained strong in me, until recently the death of my father threw me back with a jerk upon the very English side of my family. A talk with my only surviving grandfather took me into a new world of consanguinity. As forebears, he referred me to the Robertses, the Roffs and the Durmans; and a natural curiosity prompted me to see to what extent

my hitherto unsought and unrevealed relatives were to be found in the country: I mean the rural country. Now that the War was over it was possible to commence the search.

The Robertses, of course, are not a family, but a clan, dispersed throughout the British Isles and especially in North Wales, in which district, I understand, one family in every twenty is a Roberts. To look for my family needle in this haystack would, I decided, be labour lost, so I left the Roberts strain unexplored. My grandmother Roff, according to report, was the daughter of a Russian revolutionary exile, whose real name, Orlov, had been corrupted by English tongues into "Roff." My instinct, though I had no ground for the supposition, is to dismiss this derivation as a myth; in any case, Orlovs in Russia are as common as Robertses in England, and I did not feel that I should receive much enlightenment by pursuing this clue to my ancestry. There remained the Durmans. This name, my great-grandmother's, besides being less generally distributed than the others, was made still more distinctive by the fact that the place whence this branch of the family came was known. My grandfather told me that he remembered having gone, in his early days, seventy or more years ago, to stay with his mother's relatives at their farm near Harting,

which is, as he explained to me, a village in Sussex, close to the Hampshire border, near the market town of Petersfield and about sixty miles south-west of London. With this information I thought that I would go to Harting and search out my great-grandmother's records. Perhaps some Durmans would still be there; perhaps the family had died out. In any case, the search seemed well worth while for itself alone, and this was the motive for my journey.

England has not been the same since the beginning of the War. Every day I go about I feel that I am living in a country that is geographically familiar to me, but whose inhabitants have changed and are changing beyond recognition. For this reason everything I see and hear in England—in the streets of towns or in country lanes, in tram, tube or taxi, farmhouse or café—seems to me interesting. I feel as if I were really in a foreign country, whose language I speak but whose manners are often new and strange. Under the old appearances new currents are working, so if I seem prolix in my account of what I saw and heard on my journey through the South of England in search of my forefathers, I hope that my readers will perhaps be able to find some of the interest in my adventures which I did myself.

My journey to Waterloo Station was a little unorthodox. Near Oxford Street I approached a man driving a van and asked him the best way to Waterloo. He at once replied that he was going that way and offered me a lift in his van. I climbed up. People who walk or motor or travel on omnibuses through London's main streets have no conception how different these seem to one riding in a horse-van. The roads become full of strange and terrific dangers. One moves in a maelstrom of threatening collisions, runnings over, slips on a too polished roadway, hasty pullings up and bumpings upon kerbstones and cobbles. "It ain't no manner o' use driving down here with one hand," said my new acquaintance. "This teaches you how to twist 'em." A policeman put out his hand and detained us at a crossing, while motor-omnibuses and private motor-cars put us in jeopardy on all sides.

"The perlice is all right," explained the van-driver, "so long as you don't give 'em no back talk. If you give 'em back talk, they gits your number up, an' then you're done for. But if yer don't give 'em no back talk, the perlice is all right."

I suggested that driving down the Waterloo Road, which we had now reached, must be amazingly difficult, with its traffic and slime and tram lines and other obstacles.

"Lor' bless you," he said, "I've a good little mate between the shafts. 'E's a good little mate to me and 'e knows 'ow to get about. W'y, the Waterloo Road's as good as a 'oliday to him after the City. That's the place where you've got to twist 'em."

He then informed me that his horse was now about to call in for its usual half-pint. I looked astonished at this suggestion of equine intemperance, but my informant explained with a laugh that he meant only that his horse would not pass any drinking-trough without a drink. "No, not if you offered 'im twenty thousand pounds, 'e wouldn't." And after the horse had had his usual "half-pint" we reached Waterloo Station and the carman put me down with a friendly farewell.

Of the journey in the train from London to Petersfield I do not propose to write. It is a fairly safe rule that the quicker one travels the less enjoyable the journey is. To enjoy travelling the best way is to walk; one observes more, has more amusing encounters and can adapt oneself best to the accidents of the moment. Riding comes next; but already you are as much saddled by the horse as he is by you, and you can no longer gang your ain gait. Cycling is infinitely less agreeable than riding; driving is good, but one is now less independent than ever; the automobile,

except as a means of covering ground quickly, is as disagreeable a mode of travelling for the motorist who would like to enjoy his surroundings as it is to everyone else upon the road. An aeroplane is soon monotonous ; but worst of all is the train. Caged in the ugly compartments, confined to a road that has long since been scorched and spoiled, together with the whole visible surrounding countryside, dragged at a rate you cannot control in company you cannot choose, the traveller has long ceased to look for pleasure in railways. Once, travelling by train through the Caucasus, I heard some wild music coming from beside the track and through the window I saw in the corner of a meadow a Cossack dancer leaping and twirling to the notes of a native pipe, surrounded by a little crowd of local admirers. I would have given anything to be able to join the circle, but, by the time I had begun to appreciate the skill of the man's dancing, our monster had whisked us out of sight of him. Again, when once I was motoring down the steep mountain road from Kashmir into the Indian plains, and turning a corner, there came to our ears a delicious sound of music. We looked hastily up the hillside—one acquires rough and hasty movements in this fast mechanical travelling—and there in a grassy dell a few yards away from the road were two

little shepherd boys with their flocks around them, engaged in a contest of melody. The one who had just played was holding his pipe in his hand and listening to his companion, who was piping tunefully. They did not trouble to look up as we rushed by, and once again I only realised what a pleasure I had missed when we had passed by too far to turn back.

But one thing at least the train did give us on the way to Petersfield, and this was the sharp bite of the country air which rushed in while we were still in the suburbs of London. Even the air of London cannot wholly destroy the atmosphere of those of its suburbs which twenty or thirty years ago were quiet country villages.

Arrived at Petersfield, I drew my haversack on my back and sought the road to Harting. Petersfield appeared a small, snug, smug market town with a road or two of small shops straggling past the old market-place and the church. It was market day, but, as the afternoon was well advanced, most of the business was over. There was still enough bustle in the square, however, to hold a new-comer. The noise was enormous. At two corners of the square were cows bellowing for their calves which had been taken from them. Countryfolk do not heed this noise, but to townsmen

it is one of the most heartrending of all sounds. In the middle of the square three or four farmers and their drovers and boys were trying to sort out their purchases from a herd of sheep, under the amused gaze of a sergeant and three or four men of the Hampshire Constabulary. Some of the sheep, frightened by the sudden invasion of a barking sheep-dog, made a bolt for freedom in my direction. An old drover in a dirty smock ran rheumatically across their path, shouting shrilly, "Woa, you boy-oys! Woa, boy-oys!" His appearance sent the sheep back, and they scampered across a pile of hurdles towards the church. There followed a scene of wild confusion; sheep, dogs, farmers and boys were all joined in a mêlée. While it was in progress I went and inspected a statue in the middle of the market-place. It represented a man riding a horse in a Roman toga—surely an uncomfortable costume. What made it attractive was that the laurel fillet in his hair, his spurs, the bridle, the horse's shoes, and a band tied round the horse's tail were all of polished brass, which contrasted pleasantly with the lead-coloured stone. A long Latin inscription informed me that the subject was William III, called of Orange, and that the statue had been erected by a local dignitary. By the time I had learned these historic facts the fight of the

farmers and the sheep had ended in the inevitable victory of the former. Two drovers were dragging by the hind legs a pair of remarkably fat and sturdy sheep who had been the ringleaders of the mutiny. The other animals, their followers, had been split up into three companies and were being driven off in as many different directions by their new masters. The market was seemingly at an end, and, asking my way, I walked out of the little town down a country road.

It was a fine, warm evening, and ambling in the winding lane was pleasant. I soon left all trace of Petersfield behind. A few farms dotted the pleasant countryside, while a mile or two in front of me were the rounded outlines of the Downs. Through a gap in the hedge on one side of the lane I caught an oblique glimpse of the veranda and part of the croquet lawn of a little country house. Two old ladies, primly clad in black, drove past in a governess cart. A mile further on, I came to a cottage, where a robust old countryman who was drawing water from a well raised his head to look at me and to call out a good evening. The road which had been tarred and smooth was now suddenly succeeded by one of dust and pebbles, and I guessed that I had reached the county boundary between Hampshire and Sussex. Climbing a steep hill rather painfully,

for the long drought of April and May made the untarred road cruel going, I came at the top to a pleasant view. The high and rolling outlines of the Downs filled three sides of the prospect before me, with an opening in the direction of the sea, and just below where I stood was the village of Harting. It was exquisitely situated in the green and sheltered valley. The red-tiled farms and houses and the green-tiled church spire around which they were grouped nestled comfortably under the protecting hills. Long curving walls gave the village a lively shape. The place looked happy and prosperous. It has been said of Harting that it is " perhaps the most satisfying village in all Sussex." My first sight of it confirmed this judgment.

It was about seven in the evening when I came down the hill into the village, meeting a clergyman out for a stroll as I went, and reached Harting. Past a Methodist chapel and a couple of new brick houses, I came to the main street, which ran up a hill to the church and could be seen passing out beyond it and sweeping up over a shoulder of the Downs. This broad main road and a subsidiary lane made up most of the cosy village.

A villager who was carrying a bucket of kitchen-leavings to his pigs advised me to seek a bed at the " Coach and Horses," just

beyond the church, and, he said, the best inn of the village. I went uphill past the neat, red-tiled cottages that fronted the road, curved round the old churchyard, with the stocks and whipping-post, and came to the inn. I entered a tiny but rather pretentious bar-room, and asked if I could have a bed. The hostess said she was sorry, but the house was full, and replied to my next inquiry that she doubted if I should get a bed in any inn at Harting that night; she had already turned several people away before me. I returned to the centre of the village, where my acquaintance of the pig-bucket, now coming back from the sties, advised me to try the old "Ship Inn" at the bottom of the hill. At this rather more primitive hostelry, the landlord, who told me that he had only just been "demobbed" from the Army, and so was not yet fully conversant with the possibilities of his accommodation, asked me to wait till his wife returned from a chat with a friend, since only she could tell me if I could be accommodated, there being already two or three visitors in the house. I guessed that this would mean turning a son or daughter of the house out of a bed to make room for me, and as my request for supper seemed to put the landlord into further perplexity, I decided to try the third and last inn, the "White Hart." If this

cannot take me, I thought, I will seek shelter in a cottage.

The "White Hart" lay half-way up the hill in the main street, and I turned back once more. It was a simple house, not much different from the other cottages. Outside the front door was its name written up in bold letters, and a sign-post with a big bunch of black plaster grapes. I went into the bar and asked the landlord, whom I found in conversation with two countrymen, if he could put me up for the night. He was a dapper-looking young man with well-brushed hair, smart clothes, and a flower in his buttonhole. He, too, it seemed, had only just been demobilised, and he called his wife, a tall, thin and handsome woman, who looked me over carefully. There was a party of four gentlemen in the house already, she said, but there was one room I could have if I did not mind its being small. I thanked her heartily and asked for supper. "We've nothing in the house," she said, "and there's no way of getting anything to-night." And she spoke of their difficulties in view of the food shortage.

"Surely you could fry the gentleman a rasher?" broke in her husband, whose aid I had enlisted over a glass of beer. The hostess said that this was possible, and, asking me to wait for a few minutes while she got my

room ready, led me into a little back parlour and went upstairs. I set down my knapsack, put on a pair of slippers, and returned to my beer in the bar.

The landlord asked me if I had come far, and one of the two countrymen who were sitting on a bench with their mugs, said that it was a hard road from Petersfield. The other, a boy, perhaps the elder man's grandson or nephew, was introduced to me by the landlord as having just returned from the British forces in Italy. It was curious to see this youth back to his plough after three or four years of war in Flanders and Italy, countries which a few years before he had perhaps scarcely heard of.

I remembered my purpose in coming to Harting and asked them if Mr. Durman was still farming in the village. The youth shook his head; the landlord said he had never known him. I turned to the old countryman, who said he had never heard tell of any farmer called Durman, though himself born and bred in the village come these seventy years ago. The landlord asked me what I wanted such a man for, and when I told him, advised me to go to the parish clergyman. "We had a gentleman here once before, who was looking for some old family name or other, and we sent him across to the Reverend Roberts—that's

his house there up through that gate—and he must have found out something, 'cause we saw them going up to the church together afterwards and they kept walking up and down the street all the evening."

" 'E's been 'ere a long time, de Rev'end Roberts has," said the old countryman. " Ay, that he has," said the innkeeper, " but he's spry enough for all his grey hairs. Why, when the Vicar was away at the War over at—(he mentioned a neighbouring parish the name of which I do not remember)—I used to drive the Reverend Roberts over there regular every Sunday morning to take the eight o'clock service, and then he'd come back and take his own service. Every Sunday I used to drive him over, and he used to talk to one just like an ordinary person, he did, when you was out in the trap with him. I 'ad to laugh, though, one day. 'E asked me a question an' I couldn't answer him." The landlord gave a peal of laughter at this cryptic recollection, and the two countrymen smiled. I asked the elder of them if there was likely to be any celebration in the village for the signing of peace. He said he thought not—Harting was a quiet place.

" And what did you do on Armistice night ? "

" Oh, de charch bells was ringin', dat was all."

My supper arrived. It consisted of an enormous slice of home-cured bacon (a real luxury after the briny horrors that invaded England during the War), eggs, and a fine lettuce out of the garden—"The first this year," said the landlady—bread, butter, cheese and home-pickled shallots. ("We sell 'em by the penn'orth," said the landlord; "pickles is so dear in the shops nowadays.")

I supped like a Saxon king, and afterwards walked up to the old church, with the beginning of the sunset caught upon the green tiles of its steeple and the red tiles of its roof. Then I went down to the clergyman's house, and a trim maid showed me into a long room looking out upon the Downs.

The clergyman came in, accompanied by a jealous old dog, who was promptly dismissed, and when I had mentioned my errand, he courteously proposed to go through the church records with me. He fetched in half a dozen parchment-bound books, and we started with the marriages round about 1820, he taking the right-hand pages and I the left; but he told me that the records were fairly familiar to him and he did not recollect any Durmans occurring in them. We went on to the births and deaths, all written in by the hands of priests and clerks long since dead and gone. There were Dowdys and Silvesters and Budds and

Chittys and Coles and Brightwells galore, and many other old Sussex names—but no Durmans. We gave up the quest at last in despair, and the clergyman took me out on his lawn to show me where the best views and walks in the neighbourhood were. "Perhaps," he said, as we went out, "you would do best to go and see old George Brightwell, the wheelwright. He has lived here for many years, and his people were here before him. He has a wonderful memory, and would probably be able to tell you at once if your great-grandmother's family farmed here, as you suppose."

I suggested that perhaps they had lived in Harting, but had chanced to marry or be buried elsewhere in another parish. The clergyman thought that this was hardly likely. "The roads," he said, "a hundred years ago were so bad that there would be comparatively little communication between neighbouring districts; moreover, the sense of local loyalty was much stronger then and a parishioner would be unlikely to go outside his own parish on such business."

At this moment the clank of a chain betrayed the intrusion of a small white goat, which, followed sagaciously by her kid, had strayed into the garden.

"Come! Come! Come!" said the clergy-

man in slow tones of stern moral chiding. "Come! Come! What does this mean?"

The goat stopped as if overcome by the consciousness of her fault. Then, unable to bear up against the stings of conscience and reproof, she turned round and ambled back the way she had come. An old villager came out of the garden to fetch her.

"Just the man I want," said the clergyman. "Hey, Brightwell, do you or does your father or your grandfather or your great-grandfather or his father, remember anyone of the name of Durman round here?"

The old man thought for a minute and then replied in words I, a stranger to the Sussex dialect, could not understand. "He says," interpreted the clergyman, "that he thinks he has seen the name somewhere, perhaps on a tombstone. He'll sleep over it and in the morning perhaps he will recollect something more. But you had better go now to his relative, George Brightwell, the wheelwright; tell him I sent you. If he tells you anything and you want my assistance, come and tell me in the morning, and I shall be very glad to help you."

Then the kindly clergyman pointed out again to me where the best view in the district was to be caught—very precise directions, for he was a connoisseur. Thanking him and nodding

to the clergyman whom I had passed on the road on my entry to Harting earlier in the evening, and who was now come to call on his colleague, and was audibly admiring the sunset reflected on the green and red tiles of the church and the village houses, I took my leave and went off to see George Brightwell, the wheelwright.

The clergyman had given me exact instructions. "Be careful to ask for *George Brightwell the wheelwright,*" he had said. "There are many Brightwells round there. Anyone will tell you which house is his." Unfortunately, there was nobody about to ask, although it was only nine o'clock. I walked up the lane until I came to the last building, which proved to be a wheelwright's shed. I heard voices inside and knocked. The voices went on and I knocked again. No answer; still the voices rumbled on, and I began to feel uncomfortable. Then I realised that probably the men inside were old and deaf, and I gave up knocking and went back, determined to make inquiries at the nearest cottage. As it happened, this was the very place I was seeking. A little, bright old lady led me into a front room to her husband. Mr. George Brightwell the wheelwright was sitting in his shirt sleeves in front of the fire and reading the morning newspaper. He was an old man of rather less

than middle height. His head was finely shaped, squarish, with a high, straight forehead, a small aquiline nose, the mouth a little drawn with age. His hair and bushy eyebrows were quite white. He was rather deaf, but I have had some experience of speaking with deaf people—one has to speak very round and clear, and neither too soft nor too loud—and his answers were as quick as his understanding. His strength of heart and body was evident from the bright clarity of his eyes. This fine old man, I afterwards learnt, had worked at his heavy trade all alone through the War, when his assistants had joined the colours. I asked him at once, when I had apologised for disturbing him at so late an hour, if he knew anything of a farmer at Harting named Durman. He reflected for a moment, drawing on the store of memories and traditions which make him a chronicle of local life for the last hundred and more years. Then he replied, "Yes, I remember Mr. Durman. But he didn't live at Harting. He farmed at Buriton, the next parish to this; and before that he was a relieving officer at Petersfield. Then he bought the brickyard on the Portsmouth road, outside of Petersfield, near the 'Jolly Sailor.' I used to do business with him many years ago. He used to live at Hilton Road in Petersfield, but he's dead now. If he were alive now,

he'd be between eighty and ninety years of age."

I remarked that this Mr. Durman would seem hardly of an old enough generation to have been my great-grandfather. But, I added, it is an uncommon name, and if he had not been directly of my Harting ancestors, he might have stood in some close relationship to them.

"I never heard that Mr. Durman had any relatives," he replied, "at least, not about here. But I remember him well. You see, being a public official, a relieving officer, he was a well-known man; but he's been dead a long time now."

I felt a little disheartened to find that death had anticipated me in tracing my family, but I took Mr. Brightwell's advice to make further inquiries in Petersfield itself, especially at the brickyard on the Portsmouth road, by the "Jolly Sailor."

As I was going out, the old lady came in. "You remember Mr. Durman, the relieving officer, don't you?" said her husband. It seemed that she did, and she too had a good word to say for him. As I came to the street, I heard Mr. Brightwell being reminded that it was his time for a wash and bed.

"He goes to bed early, you see, sir, because he works hard."

I returned to the White Hart Inn at ten o'clock, just as the last customers were leaving and the landlord was shutting up for the night. Standing at the door with him, I drew his attention to the big bunch of black plaster grapes that hung over his sign-post and asked him what connection they had with the sign of the "White Hart." "Oh," he explained, "they are white-heart grapes, aren't they? Or white-heart cherries?" This he said with complete seriousness, clearly intending no pun. "You see," he continued, "someone climbed up the post for a lark and knocked 'em down and bruised 'em a bit. But they're fine when they're all painted up fresh."

The landlord complained of the dearth of beer. In the old days, he said, he used to be able to keep his supply for three days in his cellar before he put it on the "engine," and that made all the difference to its flavour; but a month ago he had obliged a neighbour with a barrel and had not since been able to catch up again, so that the beer had to go on as soon as it was sent to him by the brewers. And now with the new minimum wages, all the villagers wanted bitter beer instead of the cheaper ale which they had used to drink. In the old days, he said, when the farm labourers got only twelve or thirteen shillings a week, they could not afford bitter beer, but

now that the new minimum wage had been fixed at 38s. 6d. a week, and 45s. for carters, they would not touch anything else.

"The old wages were shameful," I said.

"That they were indeed," said he: "Why, in the old days most of the men never saw a bit of meat except on Sundays; they used to live on bread and cheese and pickled onions. And some of the old men are so used to this that they still won't eat hot dinners even now, when they can get 'em; no, they prefer to eat their hunk of bread and cheese and onions. Put a nice piece of hot meat in front of 'em, and they won't touch it."

We spoke of the visitors to the inn. "Things was very slack during the War," he said, "but they're looking up now." But the other night a man and woman had knocked him up at midnight and asked for a room. "Said they'd been walking over the Downs all evening. I looks at them through the window and I says, 'No, I can't take you in.' Of course, you see, it might have been 'im and 'is wife; but then it might have been 'im and someone else's wife. How was I to know as late as that? If they'd come earlier in the evening, I'd have taken them, of course," he added inconsistently. "And what was they doing out on the Downs at that hour, I'd like to know. Lost? Why, they could have made the next village by

ten o'clock easy." With bitterness he told me of another visitor, a reserved taciturn man, who stayed in the house for three weeks and never even returned a "Good morning" or "Good evening" to his host and hostess and in the end paid his bill and walked out of the house without even a "Thank you"!

After I had walked round with the landlord and seen him feed his pony and settle her for the night, I went up to bed. I had been given a very small and spotless room at the side of the house with a tiny window looking out over the lower end of the village street. In the place of honour on the wall was a photograph of Queen Victoria, faced by a large framed representation of the "First Council of the Rutland Hall Pleasant Sunday Afternoon." Half a dozen small family photographs and two vivid cardboard texts ornamented the other walls, while at the head of the bed was a cardboard representation of a tomb and on it a printed mourning inscription for some dead member of the family. The bed, as my hostess had assured me, was a good one and I slept soundly till the morning, when I woke to find the sun streaming upon me through the little window.

Breakfast over, I fastened on my knapsack and parted on good terms with my hosts. After a call upon Mr. Brightwell for final

instructions, I set out back to Petersfield by way of Buriton. I walked for some distance, not failing to turn at the top of the hill to admire Harting in the morning as much as in the previous evening, and only met two or three cyclists who sped by on their way to Petersfield. Soon it became necessary for me to inquire my direction, and I was glad to meet a farmer jogging along in his cart. He knew a footpath to Buriton, oh yes, he knew a footpath, but "it's a complicaäted path," and he advised me to go round by the road. Where did I want to come out at Buriton, he asked. "The church," I suggested, thinking that this would probably be the centre of the village—besides, there might be some Durmans buried in the churchyard. "Ah, den you goes best by the road," he said, in the sing-song drawl of a Sussex farmer. "It's one of de nicest liddle churches in de country," he added; "ah, 'tis dat; and de winder at de fur end costed seven hundred pounds."

I went down the road some little way as he had instructed me, and soon came in sight of the turning that led away towards Buriton. Here I overtook a queer fellow-pedestrian. He was a dirty old man, almost doubled with rheumatics, hobbling along with a stick and a bundle tied in a handkerchief in one hand,

and a huge and ancient umbrella in the other. His face was all wrinkled and covered with an uneven growth of white whisker; his eyes were exuding matter, and only a few decayed teeth remained. He was dressed in corduroy trousers of antique cut, a blue cloth jacket of not much younger date, and two waistcoats, one of cloth like the jacket, and one of brown velveteen; on his head was a battered billy-cock hat. He sat down to rest on a bank at the side of the road and I joined him.

"I never knowed sech hard times," he quavered. "Ah! shacking, shacking! I heerd two big gentlemen d'oder day in Winchester and dey says dere was so many people alive now as we should all 'ave t'ate one another soon. Sech poor crops, ye know, sech poor crops, I never see. And prices is so high. It's bad in de country, but 'tis worse in de towns. Mark my word, dere'll be a mutiny afore long in London—ah! a' will—dere be hundreds of dousands of men up dere out o' work, dey say, an' it can't go on; dere'll be a mutiny surely. I've seed hard times in de old days, but never such hard times as now. Iss, when I was a little lad of five, un had to go two miles to a shop for to get a bit of bread, and un had to pay dirteen and a half pennies for a drop of ale. Why, as fur back as I can remember, dere wasn't no children about dese

parts; and why? 'Cos un couldn't afford un; dere wasn't no houses for un to live in. You could go two miles den an' not see a house. Ah, turr'ble, turr'ble times!" And he shook his head. "Ah! I cen remember back a turr'ble long time. How old would you racken I was!" I hazarded a complimentary guess: "Saventy?" he replied. "Iss, saventy an' de rast! Eighty-fower last birthday, I was."

I insisted that he did not look his age and that he was much too hale to suggest it.

"Ah! I've worked turr'ble hard in my time, ah! an' lived hard too. When I was a lad I would think noding of goin' five nights a week without a bed, doin' night work out on de roads. I used to be stroang in my time, turr'ble stroang, but de roomatics 'as crippled me cruel. 'Twas biding out in de rain as done it, and heavy work on de roads. I haven' done a stroke of work now dis twalve ant tharteen year, and I haven't arned no money, not a penny. No, 'tis turr'ble hard time for old men nowadays!" I asked him if he had an old-age pension. "Yes," he said, "but times is so 'ard. I 'as to pay three shillings and sixpence for my ladging at Winchester, I do. Un woan't look at poor folk now as un used to do; it's the monied folk 's gat all d' accommodiation now. Dey woan't look at an ol'

man like me now. I 'ad a few shillings put away, but it doan't go fur dese days. I darsan' look in a shop window now, prices is so turr'ble high. Bacon's half a crown a pound; I never see sech days. Dey do say dere's goin' to be a meat shortiage this year; but an ol' man in Pittersfield—I've known 'im a number of years—'e says to me only last week, 'e says 'e never see so many prime bullocks at de market in 'is life afore. But it doan't trarble me; I can't ate it, I got no teeth.

"I've just been to see my son out Harting way. 'Tis jest as 'ard for 'im as 'tis for us old uns. I've never arsted no money from him, and I 'opes I never shall; he's got six children of his own. 'Tis one comfort, I shan't live much longer now, anyhow.

"Dere's a lot of small farmers with deir backs been broke by dis War. I used to know deir farders and deir grandfarders afore un, but dey're all dead and gone now. 'Tis all right for de big farmers, dey's been doin' well out on it all, but de small farmers has deir backs broke turr'ble. It's no use saying un can pay dese new mimminum wages, because un can't; I know un can't. I been a farm labourer meself an' I know un can't pay un. Ah, turr'ble bad times for de small farmers, 'tis now."

I asked him if he thought things would be better now that the War was over.

"De Jarmins," he replied, "is so turr'ble cunning dat in ten or twelve year dey'll be ready to have anodder cut at un. Dere's one blessing; I shan't be here to see it. War's a turr'ble thing, turr'ble. An' de Keezer! D'ye know what I'd do wid de Keezer? I—I'd hang un up by de 'eels and lat un bide! Dat I would. Lat un bide so."

As he was an old native of the district I asked him if he remembered anyone of the name of Durman. "Surely; surely, I do! Very kind Mr. Durman was to me always. Very kind to me, Mr. Durman was; a very kind gentleman. I knowed un when 'e used to have the roads."

"Do you mean he had the turnpikes?" I said.

"Ay! Dat un did. I used to fatch the stoanes for un to mend the roads. Dat was my trade when I was a young man. I had my own cart and harse. I used to lay de stoanes for un. But de steam-rollers come in and spoiled my trade! I remember, when dey first come in, an ol' man, 'e sez to me, 'You mark my wards,' 'e sez, 'I shan't be 'ere to see it, but you will. De roads woan't never be as good as they was before dey steam-rollers come in to spiol un.' An' it's true.

De 'orses can't keep deir feet on dese tarred roads; cruel for un, 'tis. Steam-rollers is no good on de level roads; 'tain't so bad on de 'ills mebbe, but on de level roads steam-rollers is no good, 'cos de water must sattle somewhere, stan's to reason it must. Steam-rollers 'as been de ruiniation of de country roads. Yes, I used to go right up Hindhead Hill—you've heard tell of Hindhead I dare say—wid stoanes for Mr. Durman in my own cart and harse. Ah! he was a parful strong man in 'is time, was Mr. Durman, and a good un too, 'e was. 'E was a Priors Dean Durman, I've heard say. An' I used to make brooms for Mr. Durman, too, I did; I used to make brooms as well as do the roads. And there was anodder Mr. Durman too; 'e was a wheelwright by trade; an' they do say 'e went up to London, but I never knowed rightly.

"But I don't live round dese partses now. I lives at Winchester now. Where the blarckies was; iss, there was six or seven harndred blarckies there from 'Murriky—soldiers—an' a rare lot of 'Murricans was dere besides un. Fine men dey was, some of un. One night dey broke all de winders, yes, and dey done de same a year afore and un can't gat glass for to mend un. Ah, parful fine fallers, some on un was.

"I must go on now; I've got to get de train at Pittersfield to get to Winchester to-night. Ooh! I've gat cramp a-settin' here. Ah! 'tis hard for an old man like me to get about these days. I'll be dead soon though, I rackens."

With my help and his stick and umbrella he pulled himself up on his feet. "I hopes you'll never be as steff as I am," he said, as he prepared to move off; "Good-bye." He held out a gnarled hand encrusted with the grime of several generations, and tottered slowly down the Petersfield road.

I took the branch road to Buriton and came to the church at last, very hot and a little footsore, for the roads were hard as iron from the drought. This church, a Norman building, was the mother-church of the Buriton and Petersfield parishes in old times. The ivy-coloured tower of the church, the farm beside it, the encircling leas and wooded hills and the yellow road straggling off to the village composed a perfect English landscape. But I found no Durmans in the churchyard; most of the tombstones were undecipherable from age.

I followed the Petersfield road through the village. After a while I emerged upon a highroad and soon afterwards I came unexpectedly to a tavern which declared itself with

emphasis to be the "Jolly Sailor." I was on the Portsmouth road—whence the origin of the tavern sign—and the brickyard of my great-grandfather (if he it was) should be near by. Sure enough the brickyard was there, but with a stranger's name upon it. I asked a workman if he could direct me to the proprietor, and he sent me a little along the road to a row of bright brick cottages. I knocked where I had been sent and was welcomed by the owner, a large and jolly personage. I asked him if his brickyard had once been Mr. Durman's who, I said, I had reason to suppose might have been my great-grandfather. He called in his wife who, it seemed, was herself a relative of the old proprietor. They informed me that Mr. Durman was not dead, as the old man at Harting had told me, but still much alive, though extremely deaf, and that he lived in Petersfield in the house which George Brightwell had described to me. An album of family photographs was set out, and I recognised, or thought I recognised in older generations, many family features that still occur in those younger than my own. "Perhaps," they said, "you come from the East Meon Durmans," East Meon being a Hampshire village a few miles away. It was agreed that I should go and see the old Mr. Durman in Petersfield, although on account of his

deafness it was doubtful if I should be able to converse with him. They were giving me directions how to find his house, when suddenly the lady, looking through the window, cried: "Why, there *is* Mr. Durman!" I looked out and saw a tall old man plodding with his stick along the road, hale enough except for the strained look so often found on the faces of the deaf. It was useless to run out to him; the open road would be the worst possible place to attempt a conversation with a deaf man. I let him pass on, deciding to go to his house later.

Meanwhile, à propos of the brickyard, the new owner told me how difficult he was finding the search for labour. "The Government say they are going to build a million new houses," he said, "but I don't know how they are going to do it without bricks. And we can't make bricks without labour." I asked him if he thought the Government unemployment grants were holding workpeople back, as many employers say, from taking work. But this, apparently, was not the main point. "Who will come and work hard in a brickyard when he can get, as one of the men who used to work for me is now getting, three pounds and more a week for doing odd jobs in the gasworks? Meanwhile, where are the bricks coming from? And the houses?"

In a quarter of an hour I was back in Petersfield.

I put up at an inn which displayed a singularly pallid Red Lion for its sign. Going upstairs to my room I came across another large photograph of Queen Victoria on the stairs, and no sign of any more recent monarch. My room was, obviously enough, part of an old house, for it had the eccentric shape and old-fashioned fireplace that used to make the interiors of houses so pleasantly individual. After lunch I walked up Petersfield's main street in search of a barber, found one, the only one, and was shaved by the proprietor's daughter. He, meanwhile, told me that the girl had learned to shave, not by trying her luck on chance customers—that, he said, would have driven business away—but by the invitation of gallant (using the word in both its meanings) soldiers of the Canadian Forces. He asked me, who at first had been inclined to demur at being attended by her, if I had ever had a better shave, and I avowed that I had not.

I went on to an address I had been given at the brickyard, the house of one who was considered particularly intimate with the Durman history. The house was perhaps the biggest in Petersfield, very new, ugly and pretentious. The door was opened to me by a young lady

who went to see if her father was in. I waited in the hall, which appalled me after the cosy inns and cottages I had been visiting. Everything it contained was ugly; little was useful and nothing pleasing; the atmosphere of genteel discomfort was stifling, and I was delighted to learn that the master of the house was out and I was free to go away. In such "good cow country," as the inhabitants call Petersfield, this offshoot of the city mode of life seemed a needless offence. I went off to the simple and roomy old dwelling in which Mr. Durman was said to live. A man I met on the way assured me that Petersfield "used to be a lively place afore de War. We had a band den every Saturday evening up at de top. But all de young chapses had to join up, and half of dem have got killed." He showed me a short cut to Mr. Durman's house, and in a few minutes I was knocking at the door.

It was opened to me by a tall, pleasant spinster whom I recognised from description as his cousin and housekeeper. I told her my errand and she showed me in, saying in an agreeable voice that seemed somehow to evade the old man's deafness, "Here is a gentleman come to claim relationship." She told me, at the same time, that she did not think I should be able to make him hear me; nobody but

herself could. The old gentleman received me with a smile and, standing on a chair for all his eighty-six years, fetched down a large family Bible from a cupboard well stocked with books. There were the inevitable volumes of the Sussex countryside—the Bible, Josephus, the Book of Martyrs and others—and a further selection that would have done credit to many a poor scholar's library. We had a long talk. I found it possible to talk through his deafness. Indeed, when I left him an hour later, the housekeeper told me that no one had had so long a talk with the old gentleman for years. He could not recall that any Durman had married a Roberts and gone up to London in the 'forties of last century, but, as he told me, his grandfather had been three times married, and my great-grandmother might well have been an aunt or cousin of his own. This grandfather, whose old-style portrait in top hat and white smock he showed me, had been a relieving officer and farmer at Priors Dean and East Meon, a few miles away, while Mr. Durman's own father came from East Meon and had been relieving officer in his turn. He showed me an old gazetteer and directory of Hampshire, which proved the accuracy of his statements. In 1859, when the book was issued, an Amelia Durman was the tenant of Slade and Windmill Farms at

Priors Dean; a William Durman was relieving officer, collector and registrar at East Meon; while Ebenezer Durman was relieving officer and registrar at Petersfield itself. Another Durman, it seemed, had set up as a blacksmith at Midhurst in Sussex, and his descendants perhaps are there to this day. On the back of the pictures in the family Bible were tables of births, marriages and deaths. Female Durmans had married Hathaways and Channons, and their families were dispersed throughout the country. The search for my great-grandmother we gave up in despair, not for lack of material, but because there was too much. After all, it was sufficient to know whence she came, what sort of stock she sprang from, and to know that the Durman family was not yet wholly extinct. I promised myself for some future occasion a visit to the smithy at Midhurst, and with this I gave up my inquiry for the time being. My aged host took me into his garden, which backed on to the church. He himself unaided kept it in good trim; he even pruned his little vine himself, to the admiration of his housekeeper. It was a delightful house and garden, and I felt proud of the Durmans when I had been shown round. With many compliments I went away, and after a vain attempt to enter the church, which is unkindly kept locked

up against chance callers, I returned to my hotel.

At supper I met a gentleman from London. There is little standoffishness in a country inn, and we were soon talking. I told him of my search for my relations and he improved the occasion by a dissertation on the possible origin of the name. "The name 'Durman,'" he said, "is probably a local form of the more commonly found 'Dorman,' and the latter would seem to have three possible derivations. In the first place, it may come from the Norman Château of Dormans and have been brought to this country by the Norman Conquerors."

"The Durmans were here before them," I said.

"Secondly, it may be a corruption of 'Dormant' and mean 'sleepy' from some remarkable trait or feat of somnolence ascribed to a very early member of your family."

"I deny the imputation," said I, "the Durmans are very wideawake."

"Thirdly, it may mean simply 'Door-man,' that is, a man who guards and keeps the door, just as 'Hayward' means 'Hay-ward' or hay-guard."

"The Durmans," I said, "have never been either respecters or excluders of persons, I am sure. I am not satisfied with any of your

explanations. No true Durman would look at them. They remind me of the manuscript at Oxford which refers to a certain Grecian who 'journeyedde ffor kunnynge yn Egypte and in Syria, and in everyche lande whereat the Venetians hadd planntedde maçonry; wynnynge entrance yn all lodges of maçonnes he lernede muche'; and he brought the craft of masonry into England. His name, says the manuscript, was *Peter Gower*. Wise and learned men have decided that 'Venetians' in this context represents 'Phœnicians,' while 'Peter Gower' is just an Anglification of the French 'Pythagore,' whom you will recognise as none other than the famous Pythagoras. If you can find me as good a Greek, 'Venetian,' or even Latin derivation for the Durmans I may perhaps accept it, but none of those you have so far put forward will suit in the least."

We were interrupted by a prosperous, red-faced gentleman who was sitting at the other end of the table. We three alone were left in the room, and he thundered at us, "We're not at the end of our troubles with the Germans yet, I'll warrant you. And we're not at the end of our troubles here, gentlemen; no, not by a long chalk. Take Labour! You go on givin' them all they want, and they keep on askin' for more. It's human nature, isn't

it? I'd do the same myself. Pah! Pah!! And then there's the new minimum wage on the land. Thirty-eight shillings and sixpence for an ordinary labourer, gentlemen; six and sixpence more for wagoners. What's the result? I ought to know. I'm a farmer and I've got five and twenty men of my own working for me. What's the result going to be? I know; and they know. They know they'll be out of work in the winter. And you've got to pay old men just the same as young ones. Just the same; I mustn't pay them part wages. What's the result? I've got three pa-tri-archs working for me; they know they'll have to go, and they'll lose their cottages, too, into the bargain. That's what the new minimum wage on the land means, gentlemen. Why, take this nationalisation of the mines! What does it mean? If there's to be any bettering for the miners, mark my words, it's the ratepayers will have to pay for it. That's what I say, and what I say I stick to. Why, the other day a man says to me, he says: 'You're a Tory Bolshevist, that's what you are!' What's a Tory Bolshevist, I'd like to know? Pah! Good night, gentlemen." Having delivered this monologue with extraordinary vigour and passion, he threw his serviette on the table, brushed the crumbs off

his waistcoat, and walked out of the room, stabbing his mouth with a toothpick.

The gentleman from London, who had, I guessed, come to Petersfield on some legal business, proposed a walk, and the two of us strolled out of the town by pleasant footpaths. Darkness began to fall. In an unfortunate moment I mentioned to him how not so many years ago I was chased by an infuriated cow. He capped this with an experience of his own with some horses in a field. I told him how the St. Bernard dog of weak intellect and jealous nature had bitten me in a Russian country house. He told me of a nasty affair he had had with an angry mountain-sheep. We were well launched into accounts of horrid experiences with hostile animals. No beast, however domestic, seemed safe. Horses, bulls, cows, stags, dogs, goats, even sheep—all were dangerous. At the most creepy part of our conversation we came to a stile which led into a field with a herd of bullocks in it. They trotted up in what appeared to us a belligerent manner. The gentleman from London bravely climbed the stile while I stood and trembled on the safe side. At my suggestion he threw a stone at the beasts, but they only breathed very hard at us through their nostrils and waved their sharp horns. My friend scrambled back over the stile and, our blushes hidden by

the failing light, we fled from the field of bullocks and returned to Petersfield by sundry by-paths, including a six-foot drop over a culvert. Never in the history of civilisation have men surrendered so completely to the superiority of the brutes.

A few of the foregoing pages have appeared in one form or another in *The Morning Post*, *The Star*, *The Daily Express*, *The New Age*, and the *Wide World Magazine*, to the Editors of which acknowledgments are due.

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